

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1886.

LADY VALERIA.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HEIRESS OF ALTCAR.

WHATEVER Bank Holiday did elsewhere, it dawned down at Altcar in full August glory. The untimely summer rains had kept the fresh green tints on the foliage and filled the brooks to their rushy brims ; and now the sun came shining warm on the sodden earth and down-beaten corn fields, bringing hope to the heart that the harvest might yet be saved, and the Thanksgiving Service something more than an opening for church decoration. Altcar being on the way to nowhere in particular, the train with the party from St. Fridolin's stopped pretty punctually at the signal-box, where the pointsman exhausted his last remaining faculties of wonderment at the sight of the arrivals. A considerable demand on them had already been made when two waggonettes, the great barouche and pair which Lord Altcar insisted on keeping up for Mary Liddell's sole behoof and embarrassment, the farm pony-cart, the brake from the Ingilby Arms, and Mr. Renwick in a nondescript vehicle of his own invention all drew up in waiting, and the subsequent discharge on his slip of a platform of a whole trainful, or so it seemed, of young ladies with a lesser following of men-folk, Lady Archdale, her daughter, the Vicar and Mr. de Cressy, "fairly bowled him over," as he told his wife at tea.

"There were all sorts there," as Hester had said. All sorts amongst the girls and their friends, from the smart young brewery clerk who bore himself so gallantly, to the dilapidated little widower whose betrothed, a strapping young lass, had taken him in hand for the sheer satisfaction of setting him and his dilapidated young family and business, "in the straw bonnet line," all to rights again. The girls, to a girl, were smart and tidy, some exceptionally stylish. The party naturally divided itself into several little groups ; but was, after

all, so much the more manageable. Elsie, everybody's friend, was missing. Hester, doing penance, as she frequently did, for her harsh thoughts of the girl, had made a point of going to see her, but uselessly. "Gone to the sea-side" was good Mrs. Ridge's explanation of her absence the first time: and on the second, Hester was received by a respectful, dark-eyed woman, a fellow-lodger, who took her messages but could in no way enlighten her as to Elsie's doings.

Hester sent her the card of invitation and a note as well, but to neither did any answer come.

All the rest were there, brimful of excitement and curiosity. Mr. Stannard handed Lady Archdale into the Altcar carriage, with de Cressy to take care of her. "Ought I not to take some of them with me?" she murmured, graciously, entering into the spirit of the day. And he, looking round to see who would be least embarrassed or embarrassing by such honour done her, made a happy selection of "Grannie," a neat, alert, rosy-faced old lady, who stepped in briskly and rolled off in state.

Then Hester and he set to work to make a judicious distribution of the rest, which was in time felicitously accomplished with Mr. Renwick's assistance. He eventually undertook the guidance of the party to Altcar Court, while Eustace made his way there by the short cut to anticipate their arrival. It was still morning prime, and he was surprised to see a little group on the terrace evidently awaiting him: his mother, as he made out, Lord Altcar and Mary Liddell. Down the terrace steps and grassy slope of the lawn came the old lord to meet him; his white hair flying and his blue eyes beaming delightedly.

"Ha, Eustace! Got here all right? I'm glad to see you. I'm *uncommonly* glad to see you! Yes, there's your mother. She *would* come out. Mrs. Burnett found her wanting to be dressed an hour earlier to-day, and she's as bright as can be. We're all ready for your flock. Mary is in her element, and we mean to make a regular fête of it. Glad of the chance to show somebody *she* isn't the centre of everything yet!"

Eustace deferred enquiries till he had greeted his mother and answered the loving queries that shone in her eyes. She looked to Mary meaningly, and Mary obeyed the look.

"Did you know that we have Mrs. Randolph here and the baby?"

"Amy? No, I hadn't heard. I'm very glad. Aren't you all delighted?"

No one answered for an emphatic second, then Mary spoke up loyally.

"It's quite the proper place for her, of course; and baby is the sweetest little thing in the world; and with poor Major Stannard abroad she must feel terribly tried and anxious."

Lord Altcar gave a sort of grunt by way of comment, and one of the maids tripping along the terrace brought "Mrs. Stannard's

dear love and when Mr. Stannard can be spared she will be glad to see him."

"I had better go to her at once. Renwick was going to bring them round by Chesterton Woods to see the view from the mill, but they can't be very much longer now."

The great drawing-room was empty. But as he entered by the window at one end, a door at the other opened, and a small figure in a trailing white cashmere breakfast-gown appeared. Running childishly up, she flung her arms round his neck, lifted a soft little pink mouth to be kissed and then, dropping her curly flaxen head on his breast, sobbed hysterically, to his no small embarrassment.

"Oh! Eustace. My dear, dear brother. Oh! I am glad to have you! I thought you never, never were coming to me. And he trusted me to you!"

"I didn't know you wanted me, my dear," he said, drawing back from her embrace somewhat disconcerted. "No one told me you were here."

Amy manifested great determination to control her sobs by the aid of a blue-bordered and monogrammed handkerchief, glancing over it piteously now and then.

"There. I am better now"—faintly and with a tearful smile. "It was only seeing you upset me. I must learn to be brave, now that I have baby to think of"—pressing a little plump white hand on the blue satin facings that presumably covered her heart—"but it is hard sometimes to bear things," and she sobbed anew.

"When did you come, and where is Randolph, and how is my niece?" enquired Eustace, letting her rest on his arm, but gently and firmly conducting her to a neighbouring sofa.

"Very well, poor little unconscious darling! *She* feels nothing. It all falls on me. When did we come? Last week—or was it a fortnight ago? It seems as if *years* had passed over me."

Amy clasped her hands carefully on one side of the cascade of lace down the front of her robe, and raised her great blue eyes appealingly to her brother-in-law.

"Tell me about Randolph. Has he gone back to Malta, or what?" he asked, seating himself near her and feeling, he didn't know why, uncommonly sorry for her.

"Y—y—yes, he has gone. It was his p—parting wish that I should come here, and I have obeyed him. But oh! it's dreadful, Eustace! Oh, don't forsake me! Remember *you* are all I have in the world now," and she dropped on his shoulder again in tears.

Eustace reflected that he had a good many people in the world on his hands besides Mrs. Randolph, and, expecting every moment to hear the carriage wheels on the gravel outside, performed his ministry of consolation rather brusquely.

"Of course I'll take care of you, dear, but what on earth's the matter? If you won't tell me plainly, I can't help you."

She sat up again and spoke rather sullenly. "It's not pleasant to be made to feel every hour that you're of no particular importance to anybody. I have no self-assertion in me—absolutely none—but dear baby *shall* be considered! I have her position to maintain, let them trample on me as they will!"

"Who wants to trample on you? No one here surely?" and Eustace against his will caressed the little hand that lay in his.

"Oh, I knew you'd take my part. If you had been here it would all have been so different. I feel the chill of that home-coming yet. No carriage to meet us. Only the brougham and Mary Liddell. Not even an apology. Not a creature to receive us—dear baby, I mean. Only your father hoping we hadn't had a cold journey, and asking if baby hadn't better go to the nursery at once!"

"I see. You had visions of pealing bells and bonfires blazing, and the cheers of a devoted tenantry to welcome baby to her ancestral halls?"

Amy lifted her great eyes. "Well, why not? It's always done everywhere for the heir, isn't it? I did say something to your father, and all he said was 'Wait till he comes,' as if dear baby wasn't his only grandchild."

"Amy, dear, this is dreadful nonsense. I'm sure Randolph wouldn't like to hear you speculating on the deaths of all three of us: my father, your husband and me, which must happen before baby comes to her inheritance. Now you must keep the rest of your sorrows till the day's work is over, for I hear the carriages. Won't you dry your eyes and come and see my visitors?"

Amy was on her feet directly, adjusting her neat little fringe at the glass, then with a backward glance and surreptitious kick at her train she took his arm.

"Of course, dear, whatever *I* may be feeling, it shall spoil no one's pleasure to-day. Now we will go down to the Great Hall and bid your friends welcome."

Eustace was infinitely relieved by this change of tone, and thanked her cordially as she swept beside him down the few broad steps to the entrance hall, where de Cressy was assisting Lady Archdale out of the carriage.

Very prettily and shyly did Amy step forward to receive her and Hester, at whom she cast a sharp second look and a third at Eustace, who she was relieved to find was just as interested in the arrival of "Granny." Then the first waggonette drove up with its load and Mrs. Goodliffe, who was fascinated forthwith by Amy's recognising her at once "from Randolph's description," aided possibly by a few words from Hester. Then came the second waggonette, and then the rest, till the great vaulted hall was full of figures and voices, with little childish Amy for a centre casting winning looks and smiles around as she bade them all welcome to Altcar, in her high, clear, infantine treble.

"We have made some little plans for the day's amusement, and must make the most of our time together as it is so short. We shall dine directly, but there will be time for you to see the house, if you care to do so, first. The picture galleries and the old state apartments where King Charles once slept—Mrs. Bates," introducing the stately old housekeeper—"knows them all far better than I do. Shall I put you all in her care for a short time? And you will come and rest in the drawing-room, will you not?" timidly to Lady Archdale, adding in an anxious little under-tone: "Oh, I *hope* they will be happy. I've never had anything of this sort to do before."

Lady Archdale smiled gracious encouragement on the shy, confiding little creature and followed her. Hester electing to keep with the girls.

"Amy," spoke Eustace rather sharply, "where are Miss Liddell and my father? Should you not have sent for them?"

"Dear Eustace, how do I know? In Lady Altcar's sad state we have to be so guarded"—this in explanatory parenthesis to her visitors. "As neither of them came to help me, I had to do the best I could all alone. You know I dare not bring a crowd about your mother without leave."

He strode off without reply, and found poor Mary alone with Lady Altcar, not daring to leave her post in Lord Altcar's absence, despite one or two imperative glances from her charge, wistfully listening to the sounds within.

"Where's Mrs. Burnett to-day?" he asked. "Not on duty?"

"Oh, yes, but she had to go out on an errand for Cousin Esmée, and hasn't got back."

"And my father?"

Here Lord Altcar turned the corner of the house, hot and breathless. "Very sorry, my dear, but I had totally forgotten to take the readings of the thermometers this morning. Observations are worth nothing if they are not regular and accurate. What? Has your party come, and you out of the way? What a shame! Why don't you bring everyone out here, Eustace?"

His voice penetrated to the drawing-room, and was answered by the appearance of the two ladies followed by the two clergymen. Amy dutifully presented the strangers to her mother-in-law and then shrank away into a position of conspicuous loneliness, while Mary sped away joyously to join the party of inspection.

"I like him," Amy thought, as she noticed de Cressy's glance of discreetly-veiled admiration stray towards her forlorn little blue and white figure. "I feel as if I could talk to him and he would understand me, better even than Eustace. I feel as if I *must* talk to a clergyman in my state of mind." And she sighed and thought of Randolph, and how detestable life was without a devoted slave at one's beck and call. There was a real genuine tear of self-pity shining in each blue eye when she lifted them to the curate, to whose soft

heart her piteous little smile went straight and true. He drew near to her at once, and, in the fashion of his country, had contrived to express the tenderest interest and unlimited sympathy in the course of five minutes' conversation before the sound of the gong announced luncheon.

Mary Liddell was bringing back the first division of her party as the others re-entered. She had learnt everyone's name with marvellous speed, and had taken Hester to her heart of hearts. The girls had looked at pictures, and listened to legends, and refreshed their toilettes, and were now keen for the next item of the programme, but here a slight change had to be made. Mary was to have played hostess at the long table in the great dining-room, Lady Altcar not being allowed to risk the excitement of so large a gathering, but this arrangement Mrs. Randolph scattered airily to the winds.

"Of course *I* shall take dear Lady Altcar's place. We must not all desert our guests. I am sure Mr. de Cressy will come and support me."

"But then—I must stay with Cousin Esmée," said poor Mary, dismally. "It won't do to let her be the only lady, as Lady Archdale is to have luncheon with her. Somebody else must be there, and you promised yesterday ——"

"My dear girl, *you* can do as you please. It's quite clear where *my* duty lies," and, escorted by de Cressy, she made her stately entry into the room where by this time all the rest had assembled.

Eustace from the foot of the table watched her with quiet amusement as she presided, distributing her gracious, condescending little speeches broadcast, and enjoying to the full the subdued whispers of admiring criticism that she knew her pretty smiles and dainty laces and picturesque gown were exciting. He was glad that she should be enjoying herself, but wished he hadn't seen poor Mary's downcast look when sent back to her duties. He must see that it was made up to her later; and meanwhile the feast was going merrily, and Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Goodliffe were deep in interchange of confidences, with the Vicar and the Major for heroes; and the good things went round—the good things of a repast never equalled in the most fashionable novel that anyone had ever read—with gold plate, and hot-house fruit and flowers, and ices and marvels of confectionery; and with the dessert came the crowning moment of Amy's life at Altcar.

There was a moment of expectation, no one knew exactly for what. Mr. Renwick thought "Grace," and looked at Eustace for instructions. The brewery clerk wondered if there was going to be any speaking, and if so, whether it wouldn't fall to him to propose "the ladies," but, on a sign from Amy, the door was flung widely open, the footman announced sonorously, "Miss Esmée Stannard," and there entered majestically a procession of three.

First, a little heap of fine linen and rich lace over shimmering satin, borne aloft in the arms of, Secondly, a dignified nurse, rustling

in black silk and clanking with jet. Lastly, a subordinate carrying a load of spare fleecy wraps.

The thrill that the apparition of a baby always seems to excite amongst womankind of every station of life ran through the feminine portion of the assemblage, and even the less impressionable masculine element was stirred with interest when the pretty childish mother rose, and, taking the other infant in her arms, turned to the company and said, with the dignity of a Queen Regent displaying an infant monarch to the populace : "I felt I could not let you go without seeing my daughter ; the only representative of the line of Altcar in this generation."

Without enquiring into the precise significance of this description, it sounded sufficiently impressive to warrant a burst of general enthusiasm. De Cressy, full of his nation's chivalry, sprang to his feet, and with a "Moriamur pro Rege-nostro-Maria-Theresa" air raised, not his sword, but his glass on high, and gave "Miss Esmée Stannard's health, with three times three !" received with tumultuous acclaim. Then the Queen-mother made her stately progress round the room with the royal infant, allowing each in turn a look, a touch of the baby majesty's soft hand, or whatever other token of devotion and loyalty suggested itself ; in the midst of which a door at the other end of the room opened, and Lord Altcar, Mary and Lady Archdale appeared, attracted by the burst of clamour.

"Hullo ! what's this ? Handing the last entrée round ?" asked Lord Altcar, ~~tot~~ altogether inaudibly.

Amy cast him a glance of wounded feeling in return for the cruel jest. "This is not a house for children," she murmured, nestling up to Lady Archdale. "I keep my poor little daughter as much out of sight as possible and steal away when I can to the nursery for an hour's play with her."

Lady Archdale and all the rest within hearing looked touched and sympathetic, while the nurse pursed up her lips dubiously and received the baby with the elegance imposed by a stiff, tight waist and two delicately ruffled ists ; and then the procession departed with the same state with which it entered.

"Almost as good, the bonfires and shouting retainers," Eustace could not help whistling as Amy passed him, whereon she fluttered back to her seat by Cressy like a wounded dove.

Lord Altcar meanwhile was addressing his guests and explaining the programme for the rest of the day. Boats were in readiness to convey those who did prefer driving to the point nearest to the scene of the Foresters' te in Lord Ingilby's park ; after exhausting which entertainment a table through the woods would bring the party to the castle ruin here a gipsy tea was to be disposed of. There was to be a miscellaneous entertainment at the school-room later on, after which fires, a torch-light procession, and supper were to conclude the day's amusement.

Even the baby's reception was eclipsed by the burst of applause which followed this announcement. Mr. Renwick almost forgot grace entirely, before, with one accord, the assemblage rose to prepare for an immediate start a-pleasuring.

"You are making a magnificent entertainment of it," said Eustace to his father as they lingered in the hall; "someone has taken some trouble to get all this up."

"It's our good little Mary here. I haven't seen her so keen about anything before. It has been a real comfort to me to find out something I could do to give her pleasure. After all it's *not* much. Lord Ingilby is a Forester, or a Druid, or both; at any rate he always throws his grounds open on these occasions and gives a sort of entertainment to his tenants. It was only to join forces with him this year. Hullo, Mary! What are you doing there? Where's your bonnet?"

"I'm not going out," answered Mary with a dim little smile, proceeding on her way to Lady Altcar's rooms.

"Not going with them? Then who is?" barring her passage—"you're not going in there, anyway. Mrs. Burnett has got back, and Esmée doesn't want to set eyes on you again till bed-time."

"But—but Lady Archdale is not going out. Someone ought to stay with her," objected Mary, still downcast.

"Where's Mrs. Randolph? Didn't she say nothing should induce her to go to the Fête? Why can't *she* stop and entertain her?"

"But she *is* going. She is putting on her walking dress ——"

"Are you talking of my mother?" asked Hester, tripping up. "She is disposed of for the afternoon. She is to be driven over to see her old school-fellow, Lady Ingilby, and we are to be trusted to chaperon ourselves for the rest of the day."

"There! you hear. Now be off, and don't keep everybody waiting." And off sped Mary, her sedate little feet almost dancing in the joy of her deliverance. She was in plenty of time for all, and was ready before Mrs. Randolph.

It was not the work of a minute to assume the quettish boating costume and sailor hat that eventually delighted the eyes of Amy's admirers. The rest had dispersed to make the tour of garden, greenhouse, or Home Farm as various fancies led, and then she reappeared only de Cressy was visible, in dutiful attendance on her pleasure.

"All gone but you?" she said, with a little pensive smile. "Why did *you* wait for me?"

"No. They haven't started yet. Is *this* the way?"—for Amy was crossing the lawn in a different direction to the broad path leading down to the water's edge, where at the landing-place was moored a whole flotilla of different sized craft: from the great gaily-decked barge with a band on board, whose powerful engine was lazily cropping the grass beside the tow-path, through various styles of tub, down to the Rector's canoe.

"Ah! I forgot you would rather be with the others. I cannot

bear to be a kill-joy, and yet there are times when I feel as if their noisy mirth would madden me. Listen!" and she turned and laid a tiny hand on de Cressy's arm. They had gained the shelter of a little thicket of flowering shrubs within sound of the ripple and wash of the river. From the landing-place came voices laughing, calling, joking, in all the fun and excitement of embarkation. The band on the barge began to bray out cheerfully an air from "Patience," there was an irregular splashing of oars, and an occasional shriek from some nervous passenger.

"Can you blame me for having no heart for it all?" Amy demanded, with reproach in her blue eyes. De Cressy felt as great a brute as if he had done any such thing, and eagerly suggested a compromise, to let the others start and follow them leisurely at a long interval, thereby reducing the strain on Amy's feelings to a minimum.

Slowly drifting down the stream in the wake of the distant music, under the green arching branches, stopping to gather handfuls of wild flowers, or sweeping out again into the sunshine over golden sand and shallow, misgivings did now and again arise in the Curate's mind that listening to Amy's sorrows, told over a lapful of forget-me-nots, with her eyes as blue looking into his for sympathy, was not precisely the help he was expected to give that day; but he comforted himself with the reflection that the others had Hester and the Vicar.

"To the light-hearted—the light-hearted. Let those who have known the sadness of life minister to each other's griefs," and he turned to the forget-me-not eyes with new sympathy.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A CALL FOR HELP.

It was in no holiday spirit that Hester had begun that day. A weight lay like lead at her heart; a weight that would have dragged her back from any pleasure-seeking of her own; that urged her to dash and unreasoning efforts to rid herself of its burden. To wild visions of a personal interview with Mr. Meynell; of appealing to Daddy to use his influence—she did not quite know to what end; of going herself to Shorncliffe to make enquiries. She could not sit with her hands folded while days were flying and detectives were blundering, and Edric's own people writing anxious appeals and offering increased rewards unavailingly, and Sir John driving her mad by ominous shakes of the head and references to "that unlucky lad, Sanderson." "Oh, to be a man and a brother officer for one brief day!"

"You'd be at Portsmouth, then, and no better off that I can see," was Master Jock's comment.

Hester was pressing on with his likeness at every available hour, partly moved by gratitude to her mother for acting so handsomely in

the Bank Holiday difficulty, partly by the consideration that the last remnants of the young gentleman's infantile loveliness were fast disappearing. They had early morning sittings and pic-nic breakfasts together in the studio, before the day got hot or Jock cantankerous. They shortened the long, light, sleepless nights for Hester and were a source of huge delight to her model.

Jock and Fraulein were going off on some private expedition of their own on that special Monday. "You'll come to me all the same at six to-morrow," Hester begged him.

"All right, but you must have sausages. No? Eggs then, and me to boil them."

Hester agreed, with a further promise of marmalade.

"And a story. A good one. I'll tell you what. I'll have all about Mr. Poynter."

"Mr. Poynter! Why? What do you know about him?"

"Lots. You bet. I know what Fraulein and Mr. de Cressy were saying last night in the gardens, when she thought I'd gone in to bed."

"Don't say 'you bet,' and tell me directly." But Jock only crowed like a cock.

Next morning, when he had lighted the little gas-stove, boiled two eggs, one hard and one soft, by the cook's egg-boiler, opened a fresh pot of marmalade and made a telephone of the bladder, he repeated his demand, and listened with a queer knowing air to his sister's version of the story that was never done telling itself over and over again in her poor little tormented brain.

"Is that all? Didn't they find blood anywhere? Hadn't he a mortal enemy? Do you think he's in disguise?—No? I know he's dead though."

"Why, Jock? What *did* you hear?"

"You ask Mr. de Cressy. I'm to keep my mouth quiet—you've just said so." Nor could threats or entreaties extract more. She had at first been feverishly anxious for a chance of questioning the Curate, but Fate and the Hon. Mrs. Randolph were too many for her that afternoon; and she suffered the cares of the expedition to absorb her as no personal ones could have done. To be always at hand for everybody's reference in everybody's emergency was the smallest part of her self-imposed duty, and her first quiet moment was when she found herself with some of the youngest and wildest girls in a boat, on the watch to prevent their upsetting themselves or it in their wild ecstasies at the sight of the flowing water, the great bulrushes nodding over their heads, the tufts of scented meadow-sweet and purple loose-strife. Snatches of talk from the two girls in the bows floated to her over the head and shoulders of the boatman in the middle.

"Believe it or not, as you like, Nelly Parsons—I saw her with my own eyes."

"Elsie Paramount! In a carriage! With a lace sunshade! I like that!"

"I'll just tell you how it was"—here Hester lost the sense—"like any Duchess; only she paid ready money. I wasn't serving, so I went and gave a look"—"open carriage and pair, and in the corner Elsie Paramount as plain as I see you—she kept her sunshade down, you know"—"only her old shabby black straw hat on"—"Addie Ridge says she hasn't been home for a day or two."

Hester began to feel languidly curious, and would have asked for more particulars, when the boatman stopped pulling. "Someone hailing us, miss. Can you hear?"

Hester heard an eldritch screech from the bank above, and perceived a small rook-boy making vigorous signs as he burst through a low fence and shrieked some words which were drowned by the sound of the band in the barge which was following them.

"He wants Mr. Stannard," said Hester. "He is in one of the first boats. He started long before us."

The boatman shouted to the boat in advance to "Pass it on!" and after some little time, for they had been coming fast down with the stream, Eustace met them returning, having disposed of his boat-load. They had shot out from between the high banks to the lower level of the water-meadows, and between the rows of mop-headed poplars could see the fields beyond, across which a horseman was rapidly approaching, waving something yellow.

"It's my father!" Eustace called to Hester in some alarm. "What can be the matter?"

Lord Altcar reined in his smoking horse, patting its neck.

"A brisk ten minutes that, old boy! I believe I'm hotter than you, though!"

Eustace scrambled to shore through the sedges and took the telegram.

"It came a quarter of an hour ago. Just as Brickbat came round, as luck would have it. In another five minutes I should have been off. I knew if I could catch you here there would be a mile of road saved, besides the chance of missing you altogether once you got into the park. What's it all about?" tossing a shilling to the rook-boy, who grinned, ducked and disappeared.

Lord Altcar, in his days of Parliamentary work, had had a private wire laid to the Court; and for the convenience of the neighbourhood, which was not large enough to have an office of its own, still kept it up, though not without many a grumble at the useless expense.

"Who's Meynell, and what does he want you for?" Eustace was asking himself the same question, wondering.

It was addressed to him from the nearest telegraph office to St. Fridolin's, and ran—

"Come to me at once. I am in great trouble. The worst has happened. I shall await your reply here."

"You see he has been to St. Fridolin's in search of me. I ought to go to him at once, but when is there a train?"

"Not till late from Altcar, but one stops at Ingildyke—the station just beyond the Park. You had better take Brickbat, that'll give you plenty of time ; but can you desert your flock in this way ?"

"De Cressy will—" the Vicar began, but stopped with a flush of annoyance ; Lionel and his fair freight were nowhere visible. Only the great barge came slowly trailing along, stopping at a shout from Eustace.

In it was Mr. Renwick, and in him was comfort to be found. He undertook at once the charge of the rest of the day's entertainment, and, moreover, promised to escort the party up to town, spending the night at St. Fridolin's.

"As you are going back to the Court, will you telegraph my reply for me ?" Eustace asked his father, pencilling on a card as he spoke. "Here it is, 'Coming back at once. Train arrives—when ?'

"It's a slow one. You'll not get in before seven."

"There it is, then. Will you give my love to my mother and explain the case ?"

"But what am I to explain ? What does the man want with you ?"

"That I don't know. It's his wanting me at all that is the alarming thing. Do you know anything of the family ?"

"No, except by name. Stop. Don't hurry," as his son was about to mount. "You'll only have to wait at Ingildyke. Tell me, who is that most charming girl ?"

"Which one ? Do you mean Miss Archdale."

"So she is not your lost pearl, eh ?" said Lord Altcar in a lowered voice, replying to Eustace's tone rather than to his words. "I'm uncommonly sorry to hear it. She is a girl after my own heart. I mean to join the party presently just to make friends with her. There's a look in her face that shouldn't be there. As for yourself, Eustace—"

But Eustace swung himself into the saddle and Brickbat gave an impatient little dance, cutting short his words. He gave more than one sharp, scrutinising side-way glance at his son's face as he walked beside him to the corner of the field where a gate had to be opened.

"Come down again soon. I would have run up to town before this, only I didn't like leaving your mother and Mary to the mercy of that little hussy, Mrs. Randolph. Eustace !" in a sudden explosion of feeling. "Can you stand the thought of that minx as mistress here ? I swear I'll live to a hundred rather than give her the chance ! If I thought I couldn't, I'd set to work to day and construct a will that should throw the property into Chancery for generations to come."

Eustace laughed as he turned Brickbat's head in the direction of Ingildyke and listened to some last shouted directions about leaving him in the Stationmaster's care to await the groom's arrival, but the laugh was a bitter one. His father's words had touched him more deeply than he cared to show. The lost Pearl ! Ah me ! Was the old wound never to heal ? Must he go till the day of his death

wincing at the random touch of a careless finger? He had always told himself that it was a pitiful thing for a man to let his life be spoilt by a woman. There was a time for love-sickness in every man's life he had supposed, but the attack would pass, and it must be a poor constitution that it could permanently enfeeble. He laughed again more bitterly as he ran over all his old cut-and-dry axioms. His scheme of life had been so perfect. It had been a deliberate attempt to arrive at his own actual value that had taken him to St. Fridolin's, and it was reserved for him there to learn the full extent of his weakness and his strength. There she had come smiling by and witched the heart out of him with a bright glance and a few soft words, and at first he had all but hated her for it. And there, one day, he knew not how, there had come to him a knowledge—bitter-sweet, poignant, exquisite—that he held in his hand the destinies of two, not one alone as he had fancied. He had done his utmost gently to unlink and dissever the thread of his life from hers, and now that he had succeeded was he to waste his later days in bewailing his success? Was he not strong enough to set before himself other hopes and aims? Was there no other woman in the world in whose love, if he might win it, rest and joy might yet be found? He asked himself the question indignantly, and something answered for him "No! A thousand times no!"

He thought of his father's words and of Hester, then put the thought away with a quick repulsion, as if he were offering her some indignity. Not Hester, nor another, was for him while his life should endure. He saw his future barren and chill but clear before him, and now let the dead past bury its dead. After which conclusion he settled himself back in the carriage and thought over every look and word of Mrs. Damien's from the first moment he had beheld her to the last.

The train took its leisurely way back to town, and the smoke of London had gathered round him before his thoughts returned to the cause of his journey, and he began to wonder at Mr. Meynell's summons. He had not arrived at any conclusion by the time the train entered the station, and on the platform he caught a glimpse of a face he could hardly believe to be Oliver Meynell's—so white and ghastly was it—peering anxiously into each carriage as it drew up.

"You've come," he said, with a gasp of relief, as Eustace got out. "I thought you would, though I could explain nothing in my message. The carriage is here. Will you come home with me?"

Seen in the gloom of the carriage his face looked whiter and more scared than at first. He cowered into a corner and sat silent till the Vicar made some exclamation on seeing that they were driving to Seagrave Place instead of Queen's Gate.

"Do you live here now?" he asked.

"Here? No. That is, I am here at present—since Sunday. The Brants are away, and I cannot go home to Constance and the children—with this hanging over me."

He said no more till they were alone together in the great, empty, gloomy dining-room. The butler hastened to fetch lights, but his master ordered them away impatiently, and they sat in the gathering twilight.

"What did you suppose I meant by that message?" he asked, standing upright on the rug before the empty fire-place.

"I have been trying in vain to imagine. Something serious has happened. Nothing else would warrant the wording. I am at a loss to understand why you should need me."

"Because I felt I could not live through another day alone with the knowledge I have gained," broke in Meynell, in a tone so like his mother's that Eustace started. "You know the story. It comes from a fresh quarter this time, that is all. I had a visit on Saturday from Stephen Magrath."

"I don't believe it," said Eustace, sturdily. "In the first place he doesn't exist."

"He does. He says he had his own reasons for leaving America quietly, which may explain the report of his death."

"And he made some claim upon you?"

"And a good one. Stannard!"—approaching and laying a heavy hand on his arm—"that man—Stephen Magrath as he calls himself—is my elder brother."

"I don't believe it," again said the Vicar, but Meynell was silent. "What is his story?" he asked.

"His reputed mother confided his whole history to him, and gave him, by way of token, some few valuables that she had preserved—a miniature of his father, his signet-ring, watch and chain;—and with these as credentials he contrived to gain admission to my mother; I don't know how or when, but recently, within the last twelve months. She gave him a letter to be given to me after her death, acknowledging him and praying me to do the same. Poor mother! poor mother! No wonder we often thought her mind wandering. How could she live without the burden of this secret driving her raving mad?"

Eustace was always touched by the change in the dry, harsh tone that the mention of Lady Valeria caused. Devotion to her was as nearly a passion as the man had ever felt in the course of his formal, orderly, measured existence. He walked to the window, and, leaning on the frame, gazing out into the dusky street, added in a strained, low tone, "She says she could not look in my face again, knowing that I knew her story. Why, do you think, should she say that?"

"How can I tell?" said the other, almost roughly in his alarm.

"She was afraid you would be angry at finding yourself supplanted." Then impatiently, as Meynell shook his head: "Then she feared you would resent her want of confidence in you—this long concealment of anything so important to the family. Won't that account for it?"

He longed to hear Meynell's answer, while recollections of some of Lady Valeria's wild words and his own wilder imaginings flashed

across his mind, and his heart filled with a great pity and dread. But Meynell was silent.

"Tell me more about this man," after a long pause. "What is he going to do next? What are you going to do?"

"What can I do? If I could doubt him, could I doubt my mother? She writes as one convinced. She lays stress on the likeness ——" he broke off abruptly, and walked up and down the room a few times. "Magrath spoke fairly enough. No threats or big words. He of his own accord suggested waiting two days for my decision. I have been able to do nothing meanwhile." (Eustace caught himself wondering whether Mr. Magrath might not possibly have taken the fact of the two days being Sunday and Bank Holiday into consideration himself). "Nothing but wait and wait."

"After all, what do you want *me* here for?" asked Eustace, not unnaturally.

If Oliver had spoken the truth he would have answered, "To persuade me out of my reluctant belief;" but that he could not do. "I wanted to see you and tell you all this to-night, for I must have my answer ready to-morrow morning. He is to come here at ten. You will come, too? I shall need a witness."

"I am to regard Magrath's position as an established fact? You don't want any help from me in disputing the claim?" Eustace asked, only half satisfied. "What *does* he claim?"

"I do not know yet. He must go over it all again to you. I have thought it out, and each time it seems more conclusive to me," said Meynell, with an uncertain, despondent look.

"It's not quite in my line—I mean had you not better consult with your legal advisers? It seems such a very serious undertaking—bringing an elder brother into the family on his own simple assertion. I think your sister has some right to be consulted."

"Mabel? No, no! Perhaps she need never hear of it." Oliver spoke hastily, in a shaking voice. "It need not affect her in any way. Any money claims *I* can satisfy."

"You think he'll be satisfied with money, without further recognition?" Eustace was getting more and more dissatisfied himself. He longed to ring for lights and have a good look at Meynell's face. Sitting in the dark hearing these despondent, uncertain remarks in reply seemed to confuse him. "If your mind is quite made up as to the course you mean to take, and I am only wanted as a friendly witness, I can have no objection to assist you so far. I shall come at ten to-morrow, then."

"Can you not come sooner? Come to breakfast. I will send the carriage," Oliver begged eagerly. "I may have more to say to you. She trusted you, and I know I have your sympathy."

"That you have," spoke Eustace, cordially, giving the limp hand placed in his a hearty clasp. "I must confess I don't enter into your views of the situation, but I am content to be left in the dark."

"I should have thought you might have seen that I hope—I humbly strive—to take this dispensation in a right spirit," said Oliver, nervously and hastily. "I—I—a—accept it as chastisement, and bow before the rod. I may have been setting inordinate store by the things of this world, and this may be sent as a warning." Eustace dropped his hand, but he went on as if he were repeating a prepared speech, gaining confidence at the sound of his own voice. "These are not the worldling's views, but as a minister you might have been expected to enter into them. I might have counted on spiritual counsel and—prayer" (this last with a gulp as if he should have disliked it uncommonly) "as it is" (in sudden apprehension of Eustace proffering one or the other) "I will say good-bye." The limp hand had grown suddenly hot and twitched uneasily, Eustace felt, before he dropped it. "Is the man trying to take in himself or me?" he thought as he walked down the street. "Both, I verily believe. I don't know yet what made him send for me, but it strikes me forcibly that for all the good I can do him I might as well have stayed at Altcar."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

STEPHEN MAGRATH CLAIMS HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

THE few who attended the early service at St. Fridolin's next morning were much impressed by the sight of the Meynell carriage in waiting to carry off the Vicar at its conclusion. It was earlier by twenty minutes than the hour named when Eustace found himself in the house in Seagrave Place. He found the banker restlessly pacing to and fro in the dining-room, looking haggard and worn, with hollow, anxious eyes and hot, shaking hands. Eustace regarded him wonderingly. He recognised fully the gravity of the situation, which had in truth cost him a wakeful hour or two that night; but he had not believed it in Oliver Meynell's cool, languid-blooded nature to take anything deeply to heart; and here he was, advancing to meet him with the faltering step and bent head of a man made old in a night by sudden calamity.

"It is good of you to come. I am very lonely here," he said in a low, hoarse voice.

"I am glad to be of any service," said the Vicar, with the expression of friendly neutrality he had resolved to himself to maintain. "I wish you had selected a more competent adviser."

"You had my mother's confidence," said Oliver, hastily. Then with a wistful look: "I wonder how this business appears to you—as an impartial observer."

"There can be only two ways of looking at it," answered Eustace, in spite of his determination to express no opinions whatever. "This man we are expecting either is your brother or he is not. In the first case he ought to be acknowledged and received into the family—if

there is no good reason to the contrary. In the second, he is an impostor whom it is your duty to resist and expose—unless you have your own reasons for letting him off. In either case you give me to understand that he is to be regarded as a dispensation of Providence, and I am pledged to suspend all judgment."

Mr. Meynell had sunk into a great leather-covered chair beside the fireless hearth. He held the arms in each hand, and sat with his head bent down.

"That is it," he said, softly and low, without raising it. "You have guessed the truth. God help me!"

"I was dealing insincerely with you last night," he went on with an effort. "I was trying to deceive myself. I can't fight this man, and he knows it; and I can't tell you why. I admit his claim—not that I believe it; the man himself inspires me with mistrust; and yet I feel if his story were tenfold more unlikely I should do just as I am doing now. I have thought of it in the night-watches, I have tried to bring myself to send for Dr. Bardswell as a faithful minister who should deal with the matter righteously, and I cannot. What am I to do?"

"Wait. That is the one thing certain. We must see and hear this man, and judge him fairly. That is the one clear duty. After that, if any sacrifice such as you dread is demanded of you, remember that you will not be alone in making it, and your sister has a right to hear and judge for herself first. That is the plain sense of the matter."

He spoke as a worldling, and was careful to do so. He knew that was expected of him for one thing, and for another, had he taken higher grounds he would have utterly failed to afford any satisfaction to his hearer, who only brought himself to tolerate him as a man by ignoring him in the capacity of a priest, though he recognised it oddly enough in the next five minutes.

"Thank you. No, I suppose there is nothing else to be done. Now, here is breakfast," and he rose to his feet and turned his back to the opening door.

The butler entered, bearing, however, not a tray, but a massive Bible and book of Family Prayers. He was followed by the household, reduced to a scanty train in these later days, two of whom carried a small red-covered bench, in front of which they ranged themselves in due order of precedence, in waiting for Oliver to officiate.

"I can't!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "I am too ill and unstrung. But I cannot let them see it. Will you take my place? As you are a clergyman they will not think it strange." So it came to pass by one of Fate's odd vagaries that Eustace Stannard conducted family devotions in the house of the Meynells!

The breakfast that followed would have been a very nominal repast as far as Oliver was concerned had it not been from his sense of

hospitality. It was long and elaborate, and carefully served, and answered one good purpose: that of getting through the interval that lay before ten o'clock.

When it ended at last and they left the room for the library, it wanted but a few minutes of that hour.

They kept silence at first by mutual consent, till the very ticking of the clock grew oppressive. Mr. Meynell drew out his watch and compared it in silence; then walked restlessly from door to window, sitting down at last cowering and shivering as with cold.

"He is late," he said, speaking at last.

"No. It is just the hour." As Eustace answered, the clock struck and a knock sounded on the door outside.

Mr. Meynell seemed to gather himself together at the sound, rose from his chair and stood a sort of ghastly shadow of his usual important self, upright and dignified, on the hearthrug.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," the butler announced, and the new-comer entered.

A man of middle height, well dressed in the usual morning attire of an English gentleman; dark hair, slightly grizzled on the temples; with a silky black moustache and wavy small beard on the chin only; complexion tanned; a quiet, watchful eye and a flash of white teeth when he spoke or smiled.

There was something foreign about him; perhaps his figure, which was that of a corpulent Frenchman before he abandons all hope of girding himself into symmetry; perhaps his shiny pointed-toed little boots; perhaps a certain floridity of speech and gesture.

So much the Vicar noticed while the man crossed the room and extended his hand to Mr. Meynell, who, after a second's hesitation, took it; and then turned on Mr. Stannard with an enquiring look, and as one who had the right to enquire.

"My friend Mr. Stannard, of St. Fridolin's," said the banker. "He was in Lady Valeria's entire confidence, and in justice to her memory I wish him to be here."

Eustace detected a certain flash of recognition as his name was mentioned, but the stranger only bowed politely.

"Ah! Her ladyship's spiritual adviser," he murmured. "Now, will you kindly present *me* to Mr. Stannard."

Meynell winced. "I have already explained who you are. The supposed son of Lady Valeria's foster-mother claiming to be in reality my elder brother."

"That's so, and I'm prepared to prove it. That's what I am. The son of Lady Valeria by her marriage with—" He stopped abruptly, for Meynell had raised his hand suddenly as if to ward off a descending blow.

"Suppose we leave names out for the present?" he asked, with a quick glance and nod of comprehension. "It's facts we have to settle first. Names aren't wanted between friends. We'll consider the

question of the first marriage as settled. *I* don't want to dispute it. Maybe *you* do, though?"

"That marriage will never be questioned by me," spoke Oliver, firmly and defiantly.

The other drew a long breath, whether of relief or astonishment Eustace could not divine. "You know you give me points by saying so?" he asked, stroking his glossy imperial and looking at him with half contemptuous admiration. "You know I don't mind admitting, if you *had* pressed that point, I might have had some difficulty in making out my case. My respected progenitor—long ago gone over to the majority—has doubtless repented his culpable carelessness with regard to his son and heir's interests. But you, my brother, make amends for all," he continued in an outburst of admiration: "you have the sentiments of a good son and a true gentleman. I, too, hope to show that I am at one with you in all that concerns the family honour. The circumstances of my early life and training may have been against me, but I trust to prove that the sentiments innate in the heart of a gentleman exist and are paramount *here*," and he drew himself up and laid one hand on his breast with an air—theatrical, perhaps—but which seemed to come naturally to the man. "Let the marriage be admitted by you. Let me feel that you in your heart acknowledge my claim to a brother's place, and I gladly do *my* share; and for the sake of one equally dear to us both I resign from this moment name, kindred, social position, and am content to die as I have lived, plain Stephen Magrath."

Magrath's voice shook, and he stopped as if affected at the contemplation of his own magnanimity. Eustace looked at Meynell, who made no response but stood dejectedly leaning against the mantelpiece, his face shadowed by his hand.

"There are still a few formalities to be gone through before we proceed to discuss future arrangements," he observed. "You are prepared to prove your identity with the boy that Stephen Magrath and Bridget, his wife, took out with them to America?" Magrath nodded. "He was well-known to many residents in Petropolis, and was always considered to be dead and buried."

The man's face fell for an instant. "Do they really think me dead, then?" he asked. "I wasn't on good terms with them when we parted. They were all jealous of me. Couldn't understand why I was always treated better than the others. Poor old Biddy. She kept the secret well."

He paused, and meditated for a moment. "If they *really* think me dead," he began, addressing Meynell, "isn't it better to leave it so? Why should we take them into our confidence? I have been taking steps to obtain evidence from Petropolis; but I will give that up, unless you require it. It would of course be so much more time gained for you," he added, with a frank smile.

"It might be advisable for you to do so," the Vicar assented gravely.

"Your story hardly fits in with that of your relations out there. Then, supposing that difficulty disposed of, and that you *are* Stephen Magrath of Petropolis, you have still to go a step farther back and prove yourself Lady Valeria's son."

"For that I have my mother's letter given to me with her own hand before her death, fully acknowledging me, and begging her son to do me justice. That would be one strong argument for a jury," he said, as if to himself, checking it on his finger. "Then my father's portrait and signet ring, his watch and chain preserved for me by my reputed mother. She felt the burden of her secret weigh heavy on her as she grew old, but she dared not have written to her foster-child even if she had known how. She could only give me the tokens and beg me to go to Europe and do the best I could for myself. I have shown them to my brother there. They would be three more pieces of evidence in my favour. Fifth—pouf!" snapping his fingers with the first approach to insolence in his tone—"I have my case clear. Why waste time going over it? The burden of disproof will rest with you."

He turned boldly on Meynell, who shrank back, helplessly.

"What do you expect in case of—in case we concede your claims?" he asked, miserably. Magrath smiled a little furtive smile of irrepressible triumph.

"Nay. That is for you to say," he answered, courteously. "Offer to me what terms seem to you just and worthy of you to offer and I shall not make difficulties."

The Vicar saw he had the game in his hands, and that interference was useless. Whatever the secret of Lady Valeria's marriage this man's knowledge of it gave him power to make his own terms.

"Do you mean that I am to give up Glenara to you?"

"No, no, that would cause public scandal. I do not desire that. Can we not make some private arrangement? I am no man of business, and am content to leave all details to you. I have not been exactly brought up to being an Irish landlord," he said, with a short laugh, "and don't covet the berth, so if you see any way to commuting my claims, I'm in. I've lived too long over there," with a jerk of his head presumably in the direction of America, "to take kindly to the old country's ways at my time of life."

"You would take money down and go away?" asked Mr. Meynell, with a gleam of hopefulness in his look. "How much?"

"What was the last valuation of the Glenara property?" demanded Magrath, promptly.

"Under sixteen thousand pounds. It has just been revalued."

"Shall we say sixteen thousand, then? I shall be strictly within my right in expecting that, I assume. Sixteen thousand!" he repeated, with a sort of lingering, admiring affection. "It is much to receive, but I also relinquish much."

"Indeed? You propose to relinquish—?"

"The distinction of being openly acknowledged as a relation would be much to me, I confess," said Magrath, with a wave of his hand. "I may have cherished my small ambitions with respect to a position in English society, to which I trust I should have been found equal. But since, for family reasons which we have agreed not to discuss, this has been deemed inadvisable, I submit. I do not even ask to see my sister Mabel. I should have liked to have seen Mabel," he repeated, regretfully drawing out one end of his silky moustache to a point, "but let that go. You offer me the £16,000 in full of all demands, with this gentleman for witness, and I accept."

"And what security do you offer that this is to be the last of your claim?" asked Eustace.

"Sir! Do you reflect that you are speaking to a man of honour?" demanded Magrath, sternly, though with a comical twinkle in his eye that seemed to express his enjoyment of his own performance.

"Perfectly. But *I* speak as a man of business, you see. There may follow demands from—if not you—your heirs or representatives some day for arrears of rent—no one knows what—unless you make us safe against it."

Magrath gave him another of those good-humoured, twinkling glances, so oddly at variance with his exalted bearing, but replied in the same tone of injured feeling: "Had you honoured me with your attention for a few moments longer, I would have explained how I propose to place in the hands of my brother forthwith every token of my identity. My mother's letters, my dead father's ring and watch, his portrait and any further possessions of his which I may be able to obtain from America. What more can I do than give him the means of destroying my identity for ever if he shall so please?"

He extended his hand, on which was a massive signet ring, a sardonyx with a peculiar setting. "It has names, dates, &c., inside," he explained. "I wear the watch and chain. I have a fancy that I should like to keep that if you did not mind. The crest and cypher should be taken off, and there is nothing else remarkable about them, you can see. Then," feeling in his breast-pocket and producing a faded blue velvet case with a cipher in gold on the back, "we need not open this; the likeness would speak strongly to anyone who had known the original, but will tell you nothing. There, behold my inheritance! A valueless one but for the knowledge in my brother's possession, and this."

He drew out a pocket-book and selected a paper, which he carefully unfolded and laid before Eustace, who recognised the writing before he read one word.

He looked at Oliver for permission, but as he still stood silent and impassive, his face half concealed by his hand, he read:—

"Oliver, my dearly loved and much wronged son, have pity on me. With the full knowledge of the love I bear you has come the full

knowledge of the wrong I have done you, for you *are* doubly wronged. Not only must I take from you your inheritance, but my love must go with it to your supplanter. I cannot help loving him—my eldest born. They took him from me at his birth, but my love endured. They told me he was dead but I felt that he lived, and the hope has kept me alive to this day. You can find out for yourself the story of my first marriage. It was known to your father before he married me—No I cannot write to you about that. Go to Mr. Stannard, of St. Fridolin's, and ask him to tell you what he knows. He did his best for me, but it was not through him that my lost one has been found again. He—your brother—will bring you this. Not till I am dead. You will forgive me more easily then. Think of my piteous story, Oliver. Think, *could* I look you in the face knowing that you knew it? He will wait, he promises me, and you will act honestly by him. I can trust you. Ask him for proofs if you will; I need none. He has his father's face and voice, and is—I solemnly declare to you—my son—my very son, whom I shall see but once more in this world. I write this in readiness to give into his hands. I write it deliberately in my full senses. Ask your sister, who shall witness my signature to this, though she is ignorant of its contents. My good, dutiful son, I grieve for you and your pain, but I die happy trusting in your love and loyalty to me. Your Mother,

VALERIA MARY MEYNELL.

(Witnessed) MABEL GERALDINE BRANT.

14 June, 1882.

Eustace read the letter aloud, slowly and thoughtfully. A low moan broke from Oliver as he ceased, and Magrath heaved a decorous sigh. "You will bear me witness that it reached you with the seal unbroken. Rather a heavy risk for an impostor to run, eh?"

Mr. Meynell turned on him wearily and impatiently. There was evidently no further fight to be expected from him.

"You shall have your money. It may take me some little time to raise such a sum; the property itself would not fetch the half if we were forced to sell now—"

"Why sell?" interrupted Magrath, eagerly. "Pay me the value by instalments. I didn't expect a cheque for the lot on the spot, though I shouldn't think you'd find any difficulty in drawing one—"

"Pay me off in so many months—by Christmas if you like—and come! I'll meet you fair and square. I'll be content to deposit these valuables with a mutual friend—let us say Mr. Stannard—in the interval. He shall give me a receipt, though!" with another confidential wink at the clergyman.

"By Christmas? That is short enough time for the arrangement I must make. Shorter than Law would have demanded. I have to provide for Mabel's portion, too," Meynell said, with gloomy anxiety. "You don't think, then, that my sister and brother-in-law would be

willing to assist you in bearing the inconvenience of this sudden call?" enquired Magrath, with a veiled purpose in the observation.

"For your own sake I recommend you not to make the experiment," was the hasty answer. "Charles would not see the urgency—He would never agree to compromise. He would demand that the whole case should be carried into Court before he would listen to a single argument in your favour!"

"Well, for my own part, I should be far from objecting to that course," Magrath observed, with a slight swagger. If he merely spoke with a sort of light, gay malignity to arouse Mr. Meynell he succeeded. Oliver turned furiously on him.

"Dare to hint it. Dare to threaten to open your vile lips in public—to make her name a scandal in men's mouths! Man! I would kill you sooner. Take my money—if it were my heart's blood it should be poured out like water in her defence—but hold your peace, at your peril! If I am sinning in this, not on me—not on you be the curse, but on him—the idle, flattering scoundrel who came into her life to blast it in its girlhood. Oh! may the burden of the woe he has caused rest on his soul to all Eternity."

Magrath nodded assent. "Bad luck to him now and for ever by all means," he murmured; then, looking at Meynell with new respect as he turned away and buried his face in his hands: "Poor devil," he ejaculated in a tone of heart-felt pity, "he takes it hard. If it were my—*being* my mother, I like him for it. He won't get out of it at her expense, you see—" in an explanatory parenthesis to Eustace—"it's a high-toned line to take that mightn't have occurred to you or me." The Vicar was too much absorbed watching his friend to disclaim. He was witnessing an unexpected revelation of Oliver Meynell's character, and was too full of intensest sympathy with the sacrifice being offered up before his eyes to attend to the other for the moment.

"Poor devil," repeated Magrath softly, and approaching Meynell laid his hand gently on his shoulder: "Cheer up, Mate!" he said, in the first tones that Eustace recognised as natural. "The game's not over at the first deal." Meynell only motioned him away with his hand, and he retreated, studying him curiously with a sincere, half-contemptuous pity; in which Eustace could detect no trace, however, of remorse or misgiving. "I suppose he *was* uncommonly fond of her. If I had guessed it would have gone with him like this—"

"You would doubtless have kept silence?" "How do I know?" enquired the other, with his favourite meditative action of stroking and twisting the long, fine tip of his silken moustache to a point. "Who can speak for himself in advance? Yesterday I was Stephen Magrath. To-day I am nameless. Tomorrow I shall be—who?"

Here Oliver Meynell lifted his ghastly face and looked towards them. I spoke hastily and sinfully just now. I pray that my words

may not be reckoned against me ; they were unworthy of a professing Christian. Such a slip as may give the enemy occasion to blaspheme."

Magrath looked horribly puzzled, but stroked his moustache in silence, making a deprecatory motion with his hand as if nothing were farther from *his* intention.

" Go now ; I can trust myself no longer. Go. You shall have your rights."

" Eventually. Of that I am assured. I candidly confess I should like the handling of a note or two by way of earnest. Don't inconvenience yourself. Notes, or cheque, or gold." His eyes flamed as he watched Meynell open his writing-table drawer and take out a cheque-book. He stood looking over his shoulder till he saw the amount filled in, when his hand went up again to his mouth to conceal a smile of complacency. He caught Eustace's eyes fixed meaningly on him. He advanced to the table with a flourish, and taking up a sheet of letter-paper made a neat, workmanlike parcel of the letter, watch and chain, miniature and ring ; Meynell handed him string and wax, and he secured them carefully, with an occasional glance of high content at the tempting slip of paper in the banker's hand. The work done, he turned solemnly to Eustace. " Take this. In your hands now rests the honour of the de Cressys. On the day when my brother's last obligation is discharged they are his, to deal with as he shall see fit. Till then you will hold them in trust for both of us." Eustace accepted the obligation gravely, and wrote a carefully worded receipt which he handed to Magrath, who was occupied in writing another for Meynell in a neat, clerky hand. He made a pause at the signature, and a hot flush mounted to the banker's pale cheeks as he took the paper and quickly put it out of sight. In another minute Magrath had picked up his curly-brimmed hat, bidden a graceful adieu to both, and with a jocund step and smile departed.

" To meet again ! " he said, as the door closed on him.

Meynell cast himself into a chair all spent and trembling.

" Don't leave me just yet," he pleaded.

Eustace had rung the bell, and meeting the butler at the door gave him an order.

" I don't mean to go for some time," he answered. " I have a great deal to say to you, and when you have had a glass of wine and can listen quietly you shall hear it."

" He is a scoundrel," said Eustace, presently. " No, that is too black a word—A rogue in grain. He knows that we both disbelieve him utterly, but as he has got you in a cleft stick he doesn't care even to take much trouble to play his part thoroughly. I think he anticipated a harder fight, though."

" My hands are tied," groaned Meynell. " He knows what I hoped even to conceal from you."

"The difficulty of proving your mother's first marriage? That would have been *his* affair surely," suggested Eustace, who, to tell the truth, had been much exercised by the apparent inconsistencies of the situation.

"If he could, I'd take his hand and acknowledge him before the whole world. No, it can never be done. The man he calls his father knew he was free. Knew it so well, that he dared to leave my mother without another message or sign. Dared openly, not many years after, to marry another woman, and this man knows it."

Lady Valeria had hinted as much, Eustace could not but admit; though then he had taken refuge in disbelief. Even now he determined not to be convinced, but mentally marked that point for future examination.

"How did this Magrath come by your mother's letter, do you suppose? Will you give me something safer than paper to enclose this precious parcel? What a stroke of impudent cleverness it was to make us the custodians. He knows it's safe and accessible, and prevents us making any attempt to deprive him of it." There was a small, soft leather case with a lock in Meynell's writing-table drawer. He gave it to Eustace, who locked the little parcel inside and handed the key to the banker. He was purposely avoiding discussion till the wine which he had poured out and pressed on Meynell should have done its work. He had taken one glass distastefully, then held it to be refilled. It was fine, delicate, yet generous wine, brought in their honour from the secret recesses of the famous Meynell cellar. Port of the sunny vintage days when this century was in the young twenties. Not to be lightly squandered on Lady Valeria's clerical friends, nor even the Brants. Lord Charles was a blue ribbon, and affected new-fashioned, fizzing messes, and her ladyship anything gassy and sweet that called itself champagne.

The sun and grape of Portugal did their work well this day.

"What can we do?" asked Oliver, his voice steady as a pinker shade dawned on his pallid cheek. "Is it possible you see a gleam of hope for me? I'd give twice that any day to prove that this villain and my mother have nothing in common. Do you—can you believe that that letter is not hers?"

"Tell me, have you ever seen that ring before? Think of it and try hard to remember. A sardonyx, and a very fine one; a deep orange, flecked with brown; (Eustace had had his gem-collecting fever in his time) and the setting—this," he pencilled the outline on paper; but Meynell only shook his head. "Never that I know of."

"I have, I firmly believe, while by his own showing that man was still in America. Think again. Never on your mother's hand?"

"Never!" spoke Meynell, positively this time. "I know the rings she used to wear, and this was never one."

"Then she must have put it on for a special purpose the second evening I met her. I seem to see it clearly. How her rings slid

loosely on her thin fingers, and this one all but fell once. She looked at it, too, with a meaning air, and seemed about to call my attention to it, but checked herself. "Yes, I could almost swear to it."

"How did he get it?"

"How did he come by that letter? I have asked you that before. There is, I think, no question of your mother having written it, but not for him—that I cannot believe."

"For whom, then?" eagerly.

"There you must help me. May she not have written it under a delusion, for some purely imaginary son? That agent had buoyed her up with hopes of meeting him again. If we could but lay hands on her!" Meynell shook his head sadly.

"No, that won't do. I know she was not herself many a time. I know from what my father told me there were peculiarities about her mania; strong delusions on some points, while on all others she was perfectly rational. But I cannot believe she would go so far as to write this with nothing definite to go upon. No, he has persuaded her into recognising him, poor soul!"

"Impossible!" Lady Valeria's wild words still ran in the Vicar's head. "Young—quite young; tall and fair like his father, with kind, bright eyes—blue eyes!" Impossible for dark, gipsy-faced Magrath to have passed for one moment as the one she was seeking. "I should like to have seen that miniature," he said, regretfully.

"It was faded almost out of recognition but could never have been like him. There was an inscription on the back with the names in full and the date," Meynell replied.

"He stole it! he forged it. The cipher on the watch was too sharply cut to have been in wearing as long as the rest of the case. If I could have only had a watchmaker's opinion on the state of the works. Meynell, you cannot let this go on. It is impossible to see this imposture flourishing before our eyes and not strike it down. It *must* be done; if only for the sake of your mother's memory. No wrong, of which she was the innocent victim, can be so great as that a vulgar adventurer like this should be permitted to make her his tool now that she is dead."

He had started up, and made a few hurried steps to and fro in the room. Meynell started up too, and stood beside him, upright and determined, his eyes alight.

"You are right! It shall *not* go on. If I had had the courage to trust you wholly from the first I might not have given way as I have done. It was the shock, so terrible and unexpected, confirming what I had been gathering with dread from my dead father and Lord Kilmoyne's letters. I had been shutting my eyes to the truth as long as I dared, and it seemed to start up in this man's person and strike me powerless. Let us only keep it all from Mabel. Brant is perhaps not so thoughtful of her as he might be, and if he fancied there was madness in her family —"

"They need not know." Eustace stood with bent head considering. "There ought to be another chance for us. I feel it, if I can but lay hold of it."

"I wish you could stay with me," Meynell said, with a sigh. "Alone with my thoughts I begin to mistrust myself till I feel as if my mind were giving way. I must go to the city to-day, though," he ended, with a sort of satisfaction.

Eustace looked up. "That woman, Euphrosyne. What have you heard of her?"

"Nothing. The police here and in Paris have been at work, but to no purpose."

"Try them again. Offer double the reward. *She's* our chance, Meynell, if we can but lay hold of her. She is either working with this man or on her own account. If the latter, she will side with us against him. If the former, she must be bought up, frightened, worked upon till she confesses. Only let me meet her face to face for half-an-hour ——"

"You shall, if money can do it. You shall do what you please. I put myself in your hands unreservedly. You have my full authority to act as you see fit. Send for me at any hour, night or day, and I'll come. Tell me what you would have me do, and I'll carry it out to the letter." Meynell, in his excitement, seemed only anxious to commit himself beyond all possibility of retraction.

"Don't pay off Magrath a day sooner than you can help. Show no suspicion and give him as little as he will take at a time, and go home straight to Mrs. Meynell and the children. If they don't do you more good than I can, I'll never offer a word of advice again."

"I do miss them woefully," with a faint, half-conscious smile. "You must see little Val some day. She is my mother's living image. Yes, I'll go back to them."

"Have you heard any more of that poor young Poynter?" Eustace asked, as they passed into the hall, and private topics must be abandoned.

"Not a word. The police are entirely at fault. I shall withdraw the reward next week. It was all one of Brant's mare's nests from the first. I am sorry for the young fellow, but I can have no conceivable interest in finding him."

So the two parted, Meynell heartened and hopeful in his own despite, Eustace to go back to a long day of the labour in which he used to delight, but which had lost its salt and savour now for some reason. Life seemed sometimes a very dreary, ugly, unholy mystery, not worth the solving—sometimes, not always. He had a brave, trustful nature, though not a joyous one, and he had early taken to himself the saying of the wise man in its full truth: "There is in man a Higher than love of happiness. He can do without happiness, and in place thereof find blessedness."

(To be continued.)

DOMESDAY BOOK.

THIS year being the eight-hundredth anniversary of the completion of the "Domesday Book," it has been determined to celebrate it under the auspices of the Royal Historical Society. We are all familiar with the name of this book, though few of us have ever seen the inside or the outside of it. It may not be amiss, therefore, to collect a few facts concerning it, so that we may be in a position to take an interest in the subject which is about to call so many of the learned and scientific together.

There is the real book as it was produced eight hundred years ago, and there is a facsimile of it, which was effected, after ten years of labour, in 1770. It is the original document which forms the subject of interest to us now.

The present home of this venerable book is the Record Office, a large and handsome building standing between Chancery Lane and Fetter Lane, a hundred yards or so out of Fleet Street.

Domesday Book consists of two volumes, a greater and a lesser. The first is a large folio containing three hundred and eighty two double-columned pages, written on vellum, and deals only with thirty-one counties. The writing is small, clear, regular and exquisite; and the red and black inks which were employed are as bright as if written yesterday.

Its original binding was wood, covered with leather and ornamented with brass; this, however, had to be removed, as it was becoming worm-eaten, and would seriously have damaged the vellum had it remained. It is, fortunately, kept by the side of the book, so that those who take an interest in the art of book-binding eight hundred years ago may see and examine it for themselves.

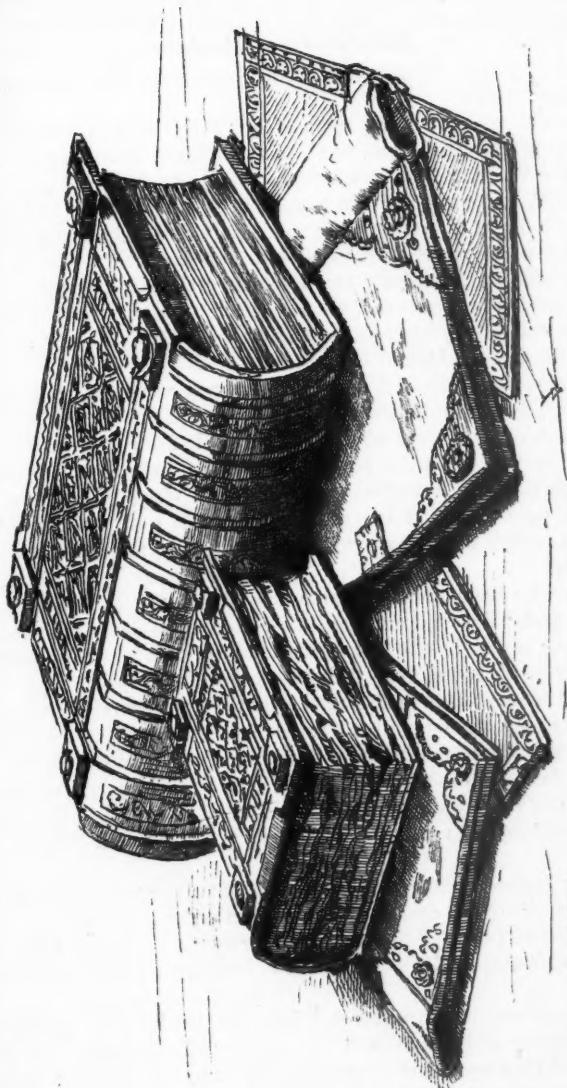
In its new binding, ornamented with silver, it turns quite a nineteenth century face to lookers-on; but you have only to open it to see, in spite of its excellent preservation, that it is no child of our time.

I have been to see it many times, but I never get rid of a certain feeling, half of awe and half of pride, that I am touching that which the hands of our forefathers wrought eight hundred years ago—hands which even now seem to have the power to force us back to the period which they have so accurately pictured.

I was there yesterday again, and I said to the Professor who stood by: "I wonder if anything we do in this year of 1886 will stand the test of eight hundred years, as this Domesday Book has done?"

"I cannot say," he replied; "and we shall not be alive to see," he drily added. And then he called to my mind the anecdote about the man who, hearing that ravens lived two hundred years, bought one to try.

The second and smaller volume, dealing with the counties of



DOMESDAY BOOK.

Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, part of Rutland and part of Lancashire, is in quarto, written in single column and in a somewhat larger character, but equally clear and elegant. Like the larger volume it is bereft of its original binding and appears in a comparatively modern one.

This book is among records what the Koh-i-noor is among diamonds, and has been the object of incessant care from the first day of its existence until now.

It was the constant companion of our early kings, travelling with them wheresoever they went, until, in the reign of John, it was almost lost in the Wash, with several other valuable records. After this, it was thought better to keep it in a place of safety ; and we find that it was early brought to Westminster and kept, with the king's seal, in the Exchequer under three locks and keys, in charge of the auditor, the chamberlains and deputy chamberlains of the Exchequer.

In 1696 it was deposited, among other valuable records, in the Chapter ; and, as we know, is now kept in a strong glass case in a room in the Record Office.

The name by which this book is known is a startling one, and it is worth while to enquire the reason for giving it such a title.

It is supposed by some to have received it from "Domus Dei," a chamber in the cathedral at Winchester so called, in which the returns were arranged and written down, and where for a time the book was deposited. It is probable the words were pronounced as in Italian, which would give "Domus Dei" very much the sound of Domesday.

A second reason for the name may be found in the fact that "doom" and "day" (dom, bocs) are Saxon equivalents of judicium, and "their union in the composition of its title thus emphasises Domesday Book as the great judicial record of the age."

A third reason for such a name is that the authority of Domesday Book has never been permitted to be called in question ; and when recourse has been had to it to determine a doubt concerning the tenure of land or other matter, there could be no appeal against its decision, any more than against a sentence pronounced at Doomsday —"Hence," says an ancient historian, "it is called 'Domesday Book.'"

Having looked at the outside and taken a peep at the inside, we will look to its origin and purpose ; and in order to do this, we must go back to the year 1085—a period of leisure to William, after long years of vigilance and anxiety spent in quelling rebellion within and without.

Like many another conqueror, when the battles were over, and a period of peace and rest arrived, he wanted to take stock of his gains and see if they were sufficient to repay him for years of sorrow, disappointment and bloodshed, and if not, to make them so.

A man who could employ his leisure in thinking and working out such a scheme as the general survey of his country eight hundred

years ago was no ordinary man ; and we shall the better understand this if we quote a passage concerning him from the "Saxon Chronicles," where he is described from personal observation :—

" The King William about whom we speak was a very wise man, and very powerful, more dignified and strong than any of his predecessors were. He was mild to the good man who loved God, and over all measure severe to the man who gainsaid his will. . . . He was also very dignified : so also was he a very rigid and cruel man, so that no one durst do anything against his will."

With this character, he was not likely to have allowed any obstacles to stand in the way of carrying out any purpose he had at heart. His idea was to take a survey of his kingdom in so accurate and detailed a manner that when completed he should be able to discover at a glance every hide of land, waste, and water within its borders ; the value and the owners of the same, the condition, employment, wealth and consequence of every individual of the population. A council was called by William, and the result was that commissioners were sent through the length and breadth of the land to ask and get answers to the following questions :—

The name of the place.

The name of its owner in the time of Edward the Confessor, and at the time of taking the survey.

The value of the place at both periods.

The number of hydes in the manor.

The quantity of demesne land.

The number and quality of the tenants.

The extent of their holdings.

The nature of the soil.

The number of mills and fishponds.

As the reports came in rapidly to Winchester, a certain method was adopted in entering them in a book, viz. :—

1st. Entitling the estate to the owner, invariably beginning with "*Terra Regis*."

2nd. The hundred was next specified.

Then the tenant, with the place, and afterwards the description of the property.

" Not a hyde* or yard of land, not an ox, cow or hog was omitted in the Census," says an ancient historian ; and Fuller, in his "Church History," concludes a sentence concerning the survey with the words, " So accurate were they in the very fractions of land." There is no doubt that the survey was made with so much exactitude and conciseness that the king not only had no difficulty

* The quantity of a hyde of land was never expressly determined. According to some authorities, it was a hundred acres, while others speak of it as ninety-six. Bede says a hyde is a piece of ground sufficient for the maintenance of a family, or as much as was sufficient to the cultivation of one plough. Bishop Kennett says hyde is derived from the Saxon *hijod*, a house or habitation, from *hijdan*, to cover.

in getting a perfect knowledge of the possessions of the Crown and the military strength of the country, but it also pointed out to him the means of increasing his revenue.

It is said that William rendered himself universal proprietor of England, and that his own annual fixed income amounted to £400,000. To understand this sum, it is necessary to remember that at that time a pound contained three times the amount of silver that it does at present, and that provisions were ten times as cheap then as now; so that, all things considered, his income could not have been less than nine or ten millions of our money. To be able to read for ourselves all that the *Domesday Book* could teach us, we should be obliged to study an ancient form of Norman French.

This to the majority of us would be impossible; but there are some, called *Domesday Scholars*, who have mastered its contents and have shown us what an inexhaustible source of interest it is to those who care for the history of their country. To no one are we more indebted than to Sir Henry Ellis, who has, in his introduction to *Domesday*, done so much to make it clear and understandable, and to E. A. Freeman, whose constant reference to it in his *History of the Conquest* has made us quite familiar with many of its details.

The picture that we get from the *Domesday Book* of the England of eight hundred years ago is as unlike our England of to-day as it is well possible to imagine.

Vast districts were then covered with parks and forests of many thousand acres in extent; and innumerable herd of swine were turned loose in them to feed upon the acorns and mast.

Our eastern counties, now so productive and healthy, were then dreary swamps, undrained and almost profitless.

Our Westminster Abbey and St. Margaret's stood nearly alone, backed by a thick wood, which sheltered thousands of swine.

The country seats of the upper classes were then four-roomed houses, with the staircases, as a rule, outside, and rarely possessing the luxury of either chimneys or glazed windows; and as to the labourers' cottages, they were nothing but mud hovels.

Again we find that the trades followed by our forefathers were very few and simple compared with those in our day. Of course, there were smiths, tanners and carpenters; but the "manufacturing interest" as represented in *Domesday* is confined to clothworkers and potters.

The women of the various households were, as we learn, so industrious and clever as to do away with the necessity of employing bakers, brewers, tailors and weavers; they were quite able to perform these tasks for their own homes and families.

It would take many pages to give all the points of interest concerning the social, political and religious condition of the people at the time that *Domesday Book* was written, and we would recommend all who care to learn more of the history of our forefathers as it appears in *Domesday Book* to study Ellis, Ewald, and Freeman on the subject.

UP ON THE MOOR.

YOU won't easily find, even in Devonshire, a prettier spot than Coombe Burleigh. The score or so of thatched, deep-porched cottages, forming the village proper, lie near the mouth of a narrow glen, down which the Burleigh brook hurries noisily along its winding way. A few farm-houses lie scattered on the steep, wooded sides of the glen, and near them bare patches of rich, red soil mark the course the plough has lately taken. At the head of the valley a grand swell of blue moorland rises boldly up against the sky, here and there lifting itself into a great granite tor. For Coombe Burleigh lies on the edge of Dartmoor; and all but *on* the moor there stands, some mile or two from the village, the big old house in which for many a generation past have dwelt the Carews of Coombe Burleigh.

One morning last shooting-season a very comfortable and pleasant little party had assembled around the loaded breakfast-table at Coombe House; for Squire Carew fairly brimmed over with hospitality and bonhomie, and his handsome, cheery wife came no whit behind in the same delightful virtues. Then there was Madge Carew, a frank and fearless girl of twenty, whose soft black eyes, raven hair, and creamy complexion told that the Squire was not far wrong in boasting of her as "pure Devonshire, born and bred." Just now she is busily ministering to the creature comfort of her brother Tom and his guest, Aleck Fairburn, a young Highland laird, whose acquaintance Tom had lately made in town, and in his father's own hospitable fashion had brought home for a week's shooting on the moor.

For some days after the arrival of the young men rain had fallen in a downright and persevering fashion, which made the Highlander feel at home in his new quarters at once; but to-day the sun shone cheerily out, and all preparations had been made for a long day's sport.

"But you must beware of the Dartmoor fogs, Mr. Fairburn," said Miss Madge, presently. "You know they come down with extraordinary suddenness; and it's no joke to be lost up on the moor in a fog, I assure you."

The young laird turned to her with a smile.

"You forget, Miss Carew, that fog is no stranger in the Highlands—either, and that we have our moors as well as you. I must have profited very little by the deerstalking at home if a mist makes me suddenly forget the points of the compass."

"But all the points of the compass together won't save you from tumbling into a peat-hole full of ink-black water, or pitching, head

first, down an old quarry, when the fog is so thick you can't see a yard before you," persisted Madge.

"I think you may make yourself easy on my account, though, of course, I am honoured by your solicitude. A sportsman must be prepared for a certain amount of risk, but I have never yet failed to make my head keep my feet from such dangers as you so vividly conjure up, Miss Carew."

There was just enough pride in the young man's gay tone to check the reply which rose to Madge's lips, but not to prevent a quiet whisper to her pet brother as she stood at the hall-door to watch the start.

"Don't let Mr. Fairburn wander off alone, Tom, if you can help it. *You* know our fogs better than he does."

And good-natured, long-limbed Tom nodded ready assent as he followed the Squire and his guest down the broad old steps.

The three had done a capital morning's work, and covered many a mile of broken, undulating moorland, before they sat down to their one o'clock lunch. So, perhaps, it was no great wonder that when the good things Madge's own fair hands had carefully packed for them had been discussed with such appetite as four hours' steady tramping could give, both Tom and the Squire should throw themselves luxuriously back on the short, warm turf, and, from gazing in silence at the fleecy clouds sailing overhead, sink into one of those brief, delicious slumbers in which alone we taste the full enjoyment of sleep, while their two followers were busy disposing of the remains of the feast.

But Aleck Fairburn was one of those uncomfortably restless mortals for whom even such an indulgence holds out no temptation; so that though for a little while he kept watch over his dozing companions with a laudable attempt at patience, it needed only the sight of a large bird sailing slowly down the wind at some little distance to make the young laird spring to his feet and seize his gun.

"There goes a heron! I must have that fellow to stuff and pair with the one I got last year. I'll be back in half an hour, Mitchelmore."

The head-keeper looked up from his lunch with an aggrieved expression on his shrewd, weather-beaten old face.

"Now, look'ee here, Jan Pearce," he remarked, severely, to his subordinate, as he watched the young fellow depart at a long, swinging pace: "when us started, this blessed mornin', young Squire, he saith to me, 'Mitche'more,' saith he, 'daunt'ee go fur to lose sight o' that there young gen'leman, 'cause he'm a stranger to these 'ere parts.' But I just put it to 'ee, Jan, *be* it raysonable to ax a man o' my years to go aff a guse-gandering in the midst o' his vittles? I bain't a goin' to do it, Jan Pearce! So there!"

"Ees fay, Maister Mitche'more," assented the under-keeper, warmly. "Us wants our bit o' vittles arl so well as the quality, us

doth ! And so both Squire and young Squire knowth, and takes their little rest like Christens. But they furriners be puir wheesht sort o' bodies—maze as a sheep, the half o' em ! Lit un go, maister ; he'm big enough to take care o' hizzel' ; and have a bit more pasty in pace, do'ee now !”

So the “furriner” was left to pursue his prey in solitude. On, and still on, flapped that heron before him ; now alighting, till he was almost tempted to risk a long shot, then slowly rising and sailing away out of sight. Nearly, but never quite. The bird might have been an evil spirit luring the pursuer to destruction, so pertinaciously did it contrive to keep alive the excitement of the chase. And Mr. Fairburn was not only a keen sportsman but an obstinate Scotchman who never knew when he was beaten. Time and distance alike faded from his thoughts in the ardour of the pursuit, until he was at length recalled to a sense of the situation by finding his further progress checked by a little river which wound its way along the bottom of a steep ravine, and, standing on the edge of the cliff, had the mortification to watch the heron flap slowly away into the blue distance. Then, with a hasty ejaculation, Aleck turned away and took out his watch.

“ By Jove ! nearly four o'clock, and I promised to be back in half an hour ! A nice sort of fellow they'll be thinking me if they have waited there all this time. Well, I suppose there's nothing for it but to make the best speed back again. It's east for about an hour and then a bit south, I know.”

No misgiving as to the correctness of this conclusion entered Mr. Fairburn's head till after nearly an hour's sharp walking. Then an uncomfortable suspicion that the great tor before him was strangely unfamiliar in aspect gradually forced its way to the front. Just at the same time the wind suddenly shifted to the west, and before the question of the tor's identity could be settled the whole horizon had vanished from the wanderer's sight, and a dense, dark fog advanced over the moor with giant strides, till it completely enveloped him in its chill embrace.

To attempt to advance in the sudden darkness seemed folly, for pitfalls abounded on every side ; and even Aleck Fairburn's impetuosity was so far quenched that he sat himself down on a great block of grey granite to await the course of events. A quarter of an hour—half an hour—an hour went by thus, and still no hint of the cold veil being lifted. Then Celtic impatience could no longer be controlled.

“ Bog-holes and quarries be hanged ! I can't sit here all night,” exclaimed Aleck, as he rose from his hard seat, his limbs already chilled and stiff. “ There must surely be some sort of shelter to be found, even in this forsaken end of the earth, if one does but look carefully enough for it. At any rate, I can't stand *this* any longer.”

But it was desperately slow work in the semi-darkness, feeling one's way cautiously forward over the rough and broken ground, thickly strewn with sharp fragments of granite; and the autumn evening was far advanced before Aleck at last found himself near a human habitation—a low, stone hut, which seemed to start out of the ground at his feet, so suddenly it loomed upon him through the fog. The cottage stood quite alone, surrounded by a low stone wall, which enclosed a little bit of land that had been reclaimed from the moor.

But no friendly gleam shone out from the small square window to welcome the weary and belated traveller, nor did his loud and continuous knocking elicit any answer from within. Still, inhabited or uninhabited, the hut offered at least better shelter for the night than the cold damp moor could do. So, with one vigorous push from his broad shoulder, Mr. Fairburn presently forced open the low door and stumbled forward into the dark apartment. At first he thought it untenanted. There were embers on the hearth, but not a spark of life in them. He spoke, but no voice answered. When, however, he succeeded in striking a match he observed in the furthest corner what seemed a bundle of clothing, and further enquiry resulted in the discovery of an old woman huddled together in a state of most abject terror. Aleck endeavoured by gentle words to allay the alarm which his forcible entrance had evidently excited, and after some time succeeded with difficulty in inducing her to quit her place of refuge.

"I've a got nort to give 'ee, sir! nort to give 'ee! If 'ee was to tak' arl there be in the place, it wouna' bring 'ee ten shillin', I swear. What do 'ee want wi' a poor old soul like me?"

"Come, guidwife, you don't really take me for a burglar?" said Mr. Fairburn, laughing. "You know I knocked civilly enough and long enough, too, before I made my way in in this unceremonious fashion. Surely you don't expect a hungry man, who has lost his way in the fog, to spend the night contentedly out there on the moor while he sees four walls before him for shelter? Just let me have a bit of fire and a little food of any sort you've got, and I'll lie down on the hearth here till morning, and pay you well for your trouble."

The owner of the cottage seemed strangely dismayed by these very modest demands.

"Daun't 'ee go vur to ax me to do it, zir, now daunt'ee," she pleaded, earnestly. "I'm a lone widder-woman; widder Trownson, they carlls me; an' I've a got nort vit vur gentry to set avore 'ee. Can't 'ee go on jist a bit varder? It bain't more'n ite mile or zo down to A——, where 'ee might get the best o' everythin' to the Blue Boar! And what be ite mile to the like o' you, zir?"

"Not very much, perhaps, guidwife, in the daylight, but a good deal more than I am disposed to undertake just now. Come, make the best of a bad job, there's a good old creature; and when you find a bit of gold in your hand to-morrow morning you'll forgive me the

little trouble I shall cause you. And I'll promise to mend your door for you into the bargain ! Only let me have a bit of fire at once, for this fog of yours has chilled my very marrow."

Widow Townson began new expostulations, which her visitor summarily cut short.

"Just tell me where you keep your wood, or peat, or whatever it is, and I'll soon have a blaze myself, if you really are too scared to set about it for me, guidwife."

The threat seemed at once to collect the old lady's scattered wits, and she hurriedly hobbled from the room, muttering as she went :

"He'm that masterful, he'm just nayther to hold nor to bind ! Lit un take it on's own head if harm cometh of it."

After a short absence, the widow returned with an abundant supply of peats, and with trembling fingers hastened to build up a fire, whose glowing heat soon restored the circulation to the young man's chilled frame. Then, with an alacrity much in contrast to her previous reluctance, she proceeded to place on the table a coarse loaf and a piece of cold bacon, and also to prepare some tea, the heat of which in some degree compensated for its villainous flavour. While the self-invited guest was busy doing more than justice to the scanty meal, his hostess absented herself, but presently reappeared with a strange air of mingled fear and perplexity about her.

"I've a made 'ee up a bed in there, zir," she said, in a trembling voice, pointing to an inner apartment. "Yer honour'll vind it clane, tho' maybe it ba'nt zo soft as you'm used to lay on. Will 'ee be plazed to go in now, zir, and give me off yer wet things to dry 'ere by the fire, ready for the morn ?"

"I hope I haven't taken your own bed, guidwife ?"

"Nay, I sleepeth allus in the press-bed, yander. Then I'll gie yer honour a end o' candle now, an' ye'll gie me out the wat cloze, want'ee ? I'll hap up the fire, an' they'll be dry's a bone by the morn."

"Really, my ancient hostess grows quite attentive," thought Mr. Fairburn, as he retired for the night into the little lean-to at the back of the hut, and willingly complied with her injunctions regarding the outer portions of his attire. The sheet which covered his impromptu couch was of the coarsest, but fragrant of lavender and thyme, and if the straw mattress was hard it was also scrupulously clean. So, as the weary wanderer sank into dreamless repose, his last conscious thought was to the effect that his unpleasant adventure had after all led to a very tolerable conclusion.

Had Mr. Fairburn suddenly opened his eyes some three hours later he might have felt less confident on the subject. Close over him there leant a tall, powerfully-built man, with the look of a hunted animal in his small, sharp eyes, and the firm lines of desperate resolve imprinted on every feature. Slowly and noiselessly the door had been opened, admitting a few faint red rays from the dying embers in

the outer apartment, and with the dexterity acquired by long practice in evil ways the intruder groped his way forward.

Near the pallet he paused to cast a look of keenest scrutiny on the sleeper, while his fingers closed more firmly on the short iron bar he carried.

Satisfied that the occupant of the bed was indeed unconscious of his presence, the man proceeded to the corner where Aleck had placed his gun, and noiselessly seized the weapon, which he conveyed with the same caution into the outer room. Then he returned and felt about with fingers which seemed almost to have eyes in their tips, until he discovered the cartridge belt Aleck had worn on the preceding day. This was removed in the same stealthy fashion; and then came the last and most delicate stage of the operations.

With the iron bar firmly grasped in his right hand, the left hand of the nocturnal visitor was by imperceptible degrees slipped under the hard pillow, and as slowly withdrawn, together with the watch and pocket-book deposited there for safety. Just then there was a slight movement on the sleeper's part, and as quick as thought the heavy bar was raised above his head. Fortunately for Mr. Fairburn his slumbers were deep and sound that night, and though the eyelids quivered they did not unclose. Silently the bar sank again, and in a few moments more the door was closed as quietly as it had opened, and Aleck was again alone.

When he awoke next morning the sun was shining brightly through the single pane of greenish glass which lighted his sleeping apartment. As ablutions were evidently, owing to force of circumstances, out of the question for the present, almost the first act of his toilet was to call aloud to his entertainer for the outer garments of which she had so hospitably taken charge the previous night. No answer was returned to his appeal, however, and Mr. Fairburn called still louder. Still silence, and he got impatient.

"I say, guidwife, where are you? Don't you hear me call? I—want—my—clothes!"

But not even an echo answered.

"Confound that old idiot! She's gone off for water or something, and forgotten all about my things. I must just go and get them myself, I suppose."

So wrapping himself in the faded patch work quilt which had adorned his couch, Mr. Fairburn flung open the door of the other room and proceeded on a tour of investigation.

What was his surprise when, crouched in the self-same corner from which she had been extricated the previous evening, her hands clasped in mute entreaty, and an agony of terror depicted on her wrinkled face, he found his missing hostess!

"Poor old thing! She's evidently a little wrong in the head," said the young laird to himself. "I must try and humour her a bit."

But at the first soothing words he attempted the frightened creature crawled forward and clasped his knees convulsively.

"Vor the love o' heaven daunt 'ee harm a pure old widder 'oman what wan't be long out 'o her grave anyhow, an' I'll tell 'ee the gospel truth, zo sure as death I wull ! "

"There, there, guidwife, I'm not going to hurt you or anybody else. Get up, there's a good creature, and get me my coat and trousers, that's all I want. Don't look so scared ; you didn't take me for a ghost walking in broad daylight, did you ? "

"You'm sure you wan't hurt me wan I tell 'ee arl ? I be in my seventy-vour', an' vrail as a bird, I be ! "

"I won't say what I shan't do if you keep me standing here much longer ! Where on earth have you put my clothes ? You haven't burnt them by accident, have you ? "

"Oh, wat wull 'ee zay when I tell 'ee ? "

And Betty Trowson fell to sobbing violently, while still clinging to her guest's knees. Mr. Fairburn fairly stamped with vexation.

"Confound it all ! What on earth am I to do with this old lunatic ? They'll have sent out a search party from Coombe by now, and it may be up here directly as likely as not. A pretty figure I should cut if Miss Madge put her head in the door just now ! By the way, I wonder what time it really is."

And freeing himself with difficulty from the unwelcome embrace, Mr. Fairburn strode hastily towards the inner room, the impromptu dressing-gown floating boldly out behind his manly form. In another minute he returned with an angry light in his blue eyes.

"Then there really *has* been some devilry or other going on in the night, you old beldame ! You've good cause to be frightened—my watch, and my money, and my gun all gone ! Tell me this instant where they are, or I'll shake the truth out of your old body ! "

Notwithstanding his angry words, Aleck lifted the sobbing old woman gently enough from the floor, and placed her in her wooden arm-chair.

"But first of all tell me where I shall find my clothes ? I can do nothing without *them*, for certain."

"Oh, zir !—daunt 'ee be zo wrath wi' me !—they'm a gone too ! "

"Gone ! gone where ? " gasped the victim.

"He've a took 'em, yer honour—Black Jan—an' the watch, an' the gun, an' arl ! But wan't 'ee have they things he'th a left vor 'ee to wear instead ? I've a got 'em arl safe here vor 'ee."

And drawing from within the press bedstead a bundle of clothing, the widow displayed before the astonished gaze of the young laird a suit of homespun, coarse indeed in texture, but pleasingly varied in hue, each parti-coloured garment being further conspicuously adorned with a huge inwoven "broad arrow," in short, the strikingly distinguished costume peculiar to the inmates of Dartmoor Prison.

Mr. Fairburn's first impulse was, I fear, to indulge in some exceed-

ingly strong language. But apparently there was something in the grim humour of the situation which suited a Highland sense of the ludicrous, for after a minute's dismayed gaze at the novel style of attire offered for his adoption, Aleck burst into a laugh so loud and long that the widow in her turn thought her guest had taken leave of his senses.

But when the laugh was over, Mr. Fairburn spoke gravely enough.

"Come, guidwife, a joke's a joke, but you must give me a more lucid explanation than this if you don't want to see the inside of Exeter gaol. What the dickens have you to do with Black Jan, who so liberally places his wardrobe at my disposal? And why didn't you at least give me the chance of a tussle with the scoundrel?"

Betty Trownson was plainly immensely relieved that her tidings had resulted in nothing harder than words.

"Oh, zir, do 'ee be thankful that 'ee be spared zafe in life and limb to zee the light o' this blessed day, instead of a lyin' in there a mangled corpse! There bain't a more desp'rate villain alive than Black Jan wan the blid of 'un is up, an' he wouldn't ha' stopped short o' murder last night if so be he couldn't ha' got they cloze any other way."

The allusion reminded Mr. Fairburn of the decidedly incomplete nature of his present attire, and led to a hasty adjournment to the inner apartment, where, seated on his mattress and wrapped in his patchwork robe de chambre, he listened to his hostess's rambling narrative.

It appeared that she had known "Black Jan," alias John Hearn, from his boyhood, he having been born and bred on the moor. While still a youth he had fallen into evil company and evil ways, and at length on a charge of housebreaking he heard a sentence of ten years' penal servitude pronounced against him. Then, naturally, he had vanished from the sight and hearing of honest folks; until as the solitary widow sat dozing over her fire the previous afternoon, a man in convict dress had stood suddenly before her, panting and exhausted from a run of many miles—"Black Jan" himself, who, having escaped under cover of the fog from one of the gangs at work on the moor, now half-besought, half-threatened the lonely old woman into affording him a temporary shelter.

"Then the scoundrel was actually in the place when I knocked yesterday afternoon!" interrupted her auditor.

"Ees fay, he was! An' both of us thought zure 'twas the sodgers after un, though he'd a made me put out my bit o' vire vor year it might sarve 'um vor a guide. I'd o'ny jist a vanished a hidin' of un in the peat-stack, out at the back, wan 'ee brock oppen the door in that vashion, zir, an' I was jist vair mazed wi' terror."

"Small wonder you were so anxious to turn me out on the moor again! But how came you to change your mind, guidwife, and become so hospitable all in a hurry?"

" Didn't yer honour spake o' goin' out to get the turfs yerzel? and wasn't I quakin' like a leaf vor year there'd be blidshed between the two ov 'ee? vor Jan had a zware he'd never be tooked agen alive. And though 'ee be a vine vigure of a man, surely, you'm no match, zir, vor Black Jan, the best wrastler in arl Devon, an' a head higher than you, bezzides! Zo wan I gooed out to get they turfs an' he zweared to me I mun either get they cloze an' money vor he, or zee thee murdered ovore my eyes, I thinked it wor no zin to zave the life ov 'ee at any price. And beyides, yer honour, to tell 'ee the *whole* truth, one winter's day many a long year agone, Jan Hearn comed up here to bring me a rabbit he'd znaired—'twant long after my ole man was a took—and he findth me a lyin' arl alone zick well-nigh to death's doore, an' he rinned a matter o' ite mile to vetch the doctor vor I; an' zo it zeemed I couldn't stand by an' zee un shot down by they sodgers like a mad dog, if zo be I could zave the live of un! Zo I made un zwear if he got they cloze an' money he wouldn't harm a hair ov yer honour's head, but go straight off voreign, an' be a honest man vor the rest o' his days, and thanks be to praise, he'm a gone."

" And I'm left stranded up here with a convict costume for sole attire! Well, guidwife, I suppose from your point of view you acted for the best, but you might as well have given me a voice in the matter, I think. If a ten-pound note and a shooting-suit will really make an honest man of your friend the burglar, why, it's certainly cheap at the price—to the country at any rate; but I must confess "Black Jan" seems to me to have started on his new career in somewhat questionable fashion. What did he want with the gun?"

" Hur zaith hur must have the gun, zo as to pass hizzel' off vun a gen'leman out shootin' lozed in the vog, jist as it might be yer honour yerzel. By now I doubt he'm on the railroad, well-nigh to Bristol, most like, vur he spake o' goin' aboard ship there."

" And I wish good luck to the ship that gets such a precious Jonah. I shall believe in his reformation when he sends back at least the price of my new gun—not before. Well now, guidwife, what about this clothes business? Of course I can't put on those abominations."

" Then, fay, I daun't know wat else yer honour be goin' to do, unless so be 'ee'd be willin' to have my Zunday gound. I'd go down to A—— for 'ee mysel' this minute if I could, but I'm that crippled wi' the rheumatics I couldn't walk a mile to zave a man's live, an' it be ite mile down to A——, gude. If 'ee would like to wait up here a bit, zir, there be a cart cometh from A—— wance in a fortnight, and bringh me the bits o' things I need to buy, he'll be here to-morrow is a week."

" Many thanks, my friend," said Mr. Fairburn, laughing, " but I shan't intrude on your hospitality so long as that, even if I should have to improvise a kilt or plaid out of your best petticoat and shawl.

But confound it all ! there must be some better way out of the scrape than that. Carew will send out to look for me, of course, and somebody is bound to turn up here before very long ; I shan't have many hours to wait."

In spite of the sanguine prediction, when night again closed in on the lonely hut Mr. Fairburn found himself obliged once more to accept the shelter of the lean-to, and the scanty accommodation it offered. Nor did the return of morning bring any sign of succour. Squire Carew and his search parties being, unfortunately, very busy dragging peat-holes on the opposite side of the moor. But when the second day, too, began to draw towards its close, and still no sign of deliverance, the prisoner's patience and his hostess's scanty store of provisions were alike exhausted by the extraordinary demands made upon them.

"Give me out the abominations !" Mr. Fairburn at last exclaimed, in the tone of a man resolved to do or die. "Give me out the abominations ! I'd as soon be shot down for a runaway convict as spend another such day as this ! Perhaps, as it's getting towards gloaming, I may have the luck to reach a friendly shelter before the police pounce upon me. If not, I must just tell my tale and trust to their having a few grains of common sense in their heads."

Half an hour later a tall figure in parti-coloured raiment might have been seen in the twilight making rapid way along the little track which led from widow Townson's cottage down to A—.

"Who goes there ?—stand, or I fire !"

"Thanks ! On the whole, I think I prefer standing." And to the surprise of the mounted patrol, into whose hands he had fallen, the suspicious-looking pedestrian advanced to meet them with a very different gait from the slouch acquired in prison-yards. Naturally they suspected a ruse, and kept him well covered with their rifles.

"I assure you," went on the stranger, "I am quite rejoiced to meet you, for I was just beginning to fear I had lost my way yet once more on this delightful moor of yours. Besides, I am sure to fare better in the hands of intelligent officers like yourselves than if any of the yokels had chanced to catch sight of me first."

"That's very fine talk, my man, no doubt," said the senior constable, grimly, "but you don't catch old birds with chaff, you know ; so we'll just trouble you to walk here between us down to A—, and give account of yourself to Inspector Fox. I needn't warn you to be up to no tricks—you'll not be such a fool as to try them on with two armed and mounted men beside you."

Fortunately for the captive "the shades of night" were falling very fast when the little procession entered the quiet country town, and they reached the police-station almost unobserved. Here they found the inspector engaged in drawing up a report, but he rose hastily at the appearance of the patrol.

"Well done, Burton ! So you've got the fellow after all ! There

have been far too many of these escapes in the fog lately ; we shall just show those Prince's Town people that some other folks are wide-awake, whatever they may be themselves ! I'm as glad——”

The inspector's happy chuckle stopped suddenly as his eye fell on the prisoner's handsome features and fair wavy hair, and he turned enquiringly to the constable.

“ I'm afraid, sir, that 'Black Jan' has given us the slip after all, and I think you'll say the same when you've heard this young gen'leman's tale, though I didn't give much heed to it myself till now that I see him fairly under the gas-light. He certainly don't answer to the description, do he, sir ? ”

“ Stand out, sir ! ” said the inspector, sharply to Aleck, for his disappointment made him cross. ‘ Black hair ’—(just see if that's a wig, Burton)—‘ dark eyes and complexion,’—‘ six feet in height ’—why, this fellow isn't above five foot ten ! ”

The inspector threw down the printed slip in disgust, and turned again to the prisoner.

“ Now, sir ! perhaps you'll be good enough to tell me what you mean by masquerading about the country in this fashion ? ”

“ Wouldn't it be more to the point if I asked what your friend 'Black Jan' meant by going off with the new shooting suit Wolmershausen had just built for me, and the gun I gave five and twenty pounds for last season ? —Look here, Mr. Inspector, I suppose you can see pretty plainly I'm not the man you want ! Can't you let one of your people fetch me some food before I begin my tale ? I haven't had a square meal these three days, and am pretty near famished. Do, there's a good fellow, and I'll tell you the story in brief while they're fetching it.”

Something in Aleck's good-humoured voice and face must have softened the official heart of Inspector Fox, for before long the wanderer was sitting down to an abundant meal of cold beef, and its attendant pickles, while the chief of the A—— police despatched a telegraphic account of “ Black Jan's ” escape to head quarters.

“ But I'm afraid, sir, that you'll have to come before the Justices to-morrow morning just as you are ! You see we're bound to produce a man as we find him ; and you've got to account to the magistrates for the possession of these clothes ; what *I* believe or don't believe goes for nothing, of course. The most I can do is to get the hearing arranged for the magistrates' private room instead of for the court.”

The prisoner sighed resignedly. “ Well, what can't be cured must be endured, evidently ; and I'm only too glad to have got back to civilisation once more on any terms. So I must take a laugh from your worthy justices with the best grace I can muster.”

“ Well, sir, it won't be a very long one ; that is, if your story is true,” added the inspector, cautiously. “ For all our justices know Squire Carew well enough, though he sits on the Newton Bench, not

ours. And now, sir, I'll wish you a good night's rest, for it's past twelve o'clock."

A Bond Street lounger wearied in the search for a new sensation might perhaps have envied Mr. Fairburn next morning when he found himself ushered by Inspector Fox himself into the presence of the half-dozen Squires and Rectors who formed the A—— tribunal of justice, but I do not think anyone else would have done so.

He says himself that, in spite of "Sartor" and its lessons, never till that day had he properly realised the moral importance of a suit of clothes. He maintains that it took all his courage to resist the impulse which prompted him to shuffle his feet and hang his head under the stern gaze of six pairs of magisterial eyes, and declares that even his h's seemed to take to themselves wings and fly away as he told his plain, unvarnished tale.

Fortunately the penance was not a long one. Before the story was well over, a rosy old gentleman, Squire Norton by name, suddenly interrupted it. "Why, bless my soul! then this must be the young fellow Bob Hilliard was talking about at dinner last night! He said Tom Carew and his father were both nearly out of their wits, and dragging every peat-hole for ten miles round T——."

"But why in the name of wonder didn't they look for me on dry ground first?" interposed the prisoner.

"Because some shepherd who has a hut over on that side of the moor told a tale about having met a man in grey, with a gun on his shoulder, just before daylight; so they jumped to the conclusion that, dead or alive, you were bound to turn up somewhere in that direction."

"And no doubt he did meet a 'man in grey,' only it happened to be 'Black Jan' on his way across country!"

"That's it! The rascal wouldn't dare to make for the station here at A—— for fear of awkward results. Well now, Mr. Fairburn, the best thing I can do is to drive home and get you a rig-out of my son's, and then we'll get over to Coombe as quickly as we can, for you'll be a sight for sore eyes there, I can tell you; bright ones, too, some of them. Bob said Miss Madge was on horseback all day yesterday, scouring the moor in search of somebody."

Perhaps the most wonderful part of all this *true* history lies in the fact that Miss Madge Carew successfully accomplished what it has been often declared is beyond the power of woman to do—she conquered the feminine impulse to utter the words, "I told you so."

This extraordinary self-restraint, combined with her frank and undisguised delight at the wanderer's safe return, so touched the susceptible heart of the young laird that there is every reason to expect before next summer the skill of the Coombe Burleigh ringers and the stability of the ancient church tower will both be tested by demands for a wedding-peal worthy of the Squire's eldest daughter.

JESSIE LEETE.

ARABELLA AT THE SALES.

SCENE I.

Old-fashioned rectory within the London radius. Hot July day. The Rev. CHARLES FAIRLOP, stout, leisurely, peaceable, orthodox parson, his daughter SOPHIA, sensible girl of nineteen, and his sister ARABELLA, flighty damsel of fifty, are gathered beneath the shade of their broad cedar tree, letters and newspapers in their hands.

ARABELLA (with vivacity). "Yes, yes, here they are, every one of them. 'Summer Clearance Sales' all over the page. Marshall and Snelgrove, Debenham and Freebody, Harvey and Nicholls, Swan and Edgar, Gask and Gask, Peter Robinson—Whiteley, of course. Oh! and here are even Howell and James, Russell and Allen, Lewis and Allenby, Redmayne ——"

RECTOR (looking mildly round). "What are you talking about, Arabella? What are all those names?"

ARABELLA. "So like a man, is it not, Sophia? He does not even know that these are the shops of London. He will say he has never either seen or heard of them!"

RECTOR. "I suppose I have heard of them; I may have seen them; but I cannot imagine what either you or I have now to do with them. You do not want anything."

ARABELLA (throws up her hands). "Not want anything! My dear brother, here have I been waiting, waiting for these July sales to be on, going without a waterproof all through the cold spring weather; and—and Sophia wants a light dress, and Jane has been asking for new tablecloths, and John Thomas has broken his hoe." (SOPHIA laughs and is pounced upon.) "Laugh if you please, but I know what I am about: I know how to take advantage of an opportunity: I think for the future. These sales are ——"

RECTOR. "All very well in their way, my dear, but ——"

ARABELLA (excitedly). "The bargains one picks up are beyond everything. My cousin Maria bought last year a dozen yards of lace flouncing for as many shillings, and half a dozen remnants of sash ribbon for nearly as few pence. Ball shoes she only gave one-and-ninepence for ——"

SOPHIA. "What did Maria want with ball shoes?"

ARABELLA. "It would have been a sin and shame to let them go. And as for the flouncing, it will last her for years."

SOPHIA. "It will, for she will never use it."

ARABELLA (peevishly). "How you do lie at the catch! I heard you

yourself say you meant to buy your new light dress at the after-season sales."

SOPHIA. "My dear aunt, so I shall. I hope to get one for a good deal less than I should at another time, but ——" (*pauses to look at her father*).

RECTOR (*puts his rather heavy foot in it all unconsciously*). "Aye, aye, trust my Sophia. She will get just what she needs, no more and no less."

ARABELLA (*colouring up*). "But *I* am not to be trusted. Upon my word, I did not expect—" (*Rambles on for some time, while father and daughter unite in peacemaking, and signify to one another that they must give way about the sales.*)

ARABELLA (*restored to good humour*). "So you really thought I should be run away with? Well, at my age—but, to be sure, I always was young, and I suppose I always shall be. The staid Sophia must keep me within bounds to-morrow, and we shall only buy the very cheapest things at each place. Where shall we begin? Shall we go first to the North or the South side of the park? Shall we take the underground, or the omnibus? Sloane Square for Harvey and Nicholls, or the Royal Oak for Whiteley's. See, Charles, how methodical I can be; I know the best way to each place; I ——"

RECTOR (*drily*). "I have not the slightest doubt, my dear Arabella, of your finding the direct route to every snare; my only fear is, that, once in the trap, once inside ——"

ARABELLA. "Once inside I am at home everywhere. Even in the labyrinths of Whiteley's, with the 'seven shops through' and 'Queen's Road department' being dinned into my ears on every side, I am never at a loss ——"

SOPHIA (*aside*). "Papa, it is of no use, she cannot understand. Just let her go."

RECTOR (*shrugs his shoulders*). "Let her go? Cart ropes would not keep her back. And she will toil, and strain, and struggle to the front of every counter, pant up every staircase, squeeze through every doorway ——"

SOPHIA (*smiling*). "And examine the reduction of every ticketed article within her reach. But she has set her heart on going, so please order the chaise for an early train, that we may have the whole day for this weary pilgrimage. I will do my best to get through it without too much loss of money, time and temper."

RECTOR (*alone*). "My daughter's sweetness almost reconciles me to my sister's simplicity, and her wisdom compensates for Arabella's folly."

SCENE II.

London. MISS FAIRLOP and her niece, plainly attired in washing dresses, black-beaded mantillas, and serviceable bonnets, emerge from an East End omnibus, holding large bags in their hands.

SOPHIA (presently). "Is there really need for our going to any more now? We have been to so many, and seen the same things everywhere. Everywhere the same piles of parasols and umbrellas, the same cascades of fur trimmings and boas, the same vast plateaux of artificial flowers, rainbows of ribbons, waggon loads of green wicker work, and hecatombs of fans, sachets, handkerchiefs, shawls and cloaks. You have already bought more—(*chokes down the word "trumpery"*) than you know what to do with, and —"

MISS F. (complacently). "Very true; we have done a great deal. We have had a most successful expedition. Such bargains. But it would be a pity not to go to all. I am laying in a perfect stock of winter usefuls, and though you tried to dissuade me from taking the whole of that strip of window blind, it is the very thing my cousin Maria is sure to want directly she sees it, and she will take any I have over. As for the Swiss embroidery, it always comes in; and though I have no immediate need of gloves, it would have been foolish to let those very cheap ones go. Gloves will *always* come in. Those pretty neckties, only fourpence three-farthings each, I shall give the maids. They will never guess how little they cost."

SOPHIA. "Why not? They have only to come to the sales like ourselves."

MISS F. "To be sure, that is true. Well, the ties must find other recipients then; I could not pass them over. Those carriage blankets were really marvellous, Sophia; I must speak to your papa first, but I hope he will send for one at once."

SOPHIA. "What in the world should we do with a smart embroidered carriage blanket on our poor old chaise?"

MISS F. "They were going such bargains. But, however —" (*Enters a doorway, turning her head from side to side, and proceeding to investigate articles of every description as she slowly moves forward.*) "Now, Sophia, for your summer dress. Sophia, Sophia, wait one moment: you go on so fast; do look at these evening wraps—I call them extremely pretty; and this dark red —"

SOPHIA (gently urging her aunt forward). "Very pretty. The costume department is upstairs."

MISS F. (coming to standstill). "I have a great mind to have some of that fringe. Fringe is usually such a price, and my mantle —"

SOPHIA (persuasively). "Yes, but you can think how much of it would be required while we are upstairs."

MISS F. "To be sure, yes. What a pretty work-bag. My work-bag is quite worn out."

SOPHIA (hastily). "Those are nice table-covers half-way up the stairs."

MISS F. "Where, where?"

SOPHIA. "In front." (*Aside*). "Thank heavens, we are here at last. The only place I really wished to come to, and I should thankfully have given it up to have got away." (*Looks at reduced summer dresses.*) "My dear aunt, do sit down and rest."

MISS F. (*sinks wearily into a chair*). "How tired I am!" (*Suddenly rises, and darts forward to where another customer is having costumes spread before her.*) "Please allow me to see that one. It is just the sort of gown I require. How much? Six guineas? Six guineas reduced? Oh!" (*Returns to her seat somewhat daunted. After another minute's pause, darts forward again.*) "How much did you say those tulle skirts were? Five shillings? Five shillings! Why, Sophia, Sophia ——" (*Repeats the price, meantime turning over in her hand a faded and soiled ball skirt, which has been reduced to the above sum.*)

SOPHIA (*in a low voice*). "My dear aunt, I would not be seen in such a thing."

MISS F. "But, my dear, the price."

SOPHIA. "What does the price matter if I could not wear it? It would simply be five shillings thrown away."

MISS F. "Well, it is not as fresh as—perhaps you are right. Now, what have you chosen? Oh, already? But, my dear, do not be in too great a hurry. Look at this, and this, and this—" (*Going from one to another. Meantime, SOPHIA gives her address, and pays for her purchase.*) "Ready so soon? And you have actually bought it? Well, now for downstairs again. I saw some luggage straps on my way up, and the holidays will soon be here."

SOPHIA. "But we are not going away."

MISS F. "We may go. It is well to be prepared."

SOPHIA. "The other door, aunt. It will take us into Oxford Street." (*Succeeds in gradually beguiling her aunt towards it, and across the threshold; but MISS FAIRLOP comes to a dead stop before the window.*)

MISS F. "Those curtains, my dear. Your father's study. Really it does need new curtains."

SOPHIA. "Even if it does, we have no measurements."

MISS F. "True. Well, I must measure when we go home. But that small rug, there is no measurement required for it. So pretty, and so cheap. It would really be a pity not to ——" (*Re-enters the shop, and buys the rug.*)

MISS F. (*in renewed spirits*). "Now for the other side of the Park, though to be sure, I have not much money left. Still, we may as well just have a look."

SOPHIA (*archly*). "And get your waterproof."

MISS F. "My waterproof? I am afraid I shall have to give that up. It must wait for another year, or I can get it at Christmas. Sales are on again then, you know. After all, in such weather one should not be thinking of waterproofs."

SCENE III.

The RECTOR'S study. Round the open windows the westeria and dark red trumpet-blossoms cluster thickly ; while the luscious scent of the magnolia makes all the warm air heavy within. Every now and then a large moth dashes wildly in, and beats itself against the glass of the solitary lamp, or is heard rustling up and down in the curtained corner of the ceiling. Bats fly past in the dusk. MR. FAIRLOP, extended luxuriously on the worn-out ample couch, fans himself with his pocket-handkerchief and soliloquises half aloud.

RECTOR. "What a day to have been fagging and sweating in town ! How thankful I am to have this quiet old semi-country place to live in ! It is at least out of the glare and fever of London, if it is not quite among the bean fields. The flowers thrive too, and we can lead a rational life—if Arabella would only let us. What a time she is in coming ! That poor child of mine —" (Takes out his gold repeater watch, and consults it. The door-bell rings at the moment, and presently in come the absentees.)

ARABELLA (triumphantly). "Here we are, here we are. Well, you do look comfortable, and as if you had lain there all day ; while we—Oh, my dear Charles, such a day as we have had ! Such heat, such noise, such a Babel of voices, such crowding, such cramming, such a fuss to get a thing before it is snapped up by somebody else, such a Napoleonic expedition altogether !"

RECTOR (rather gravely). "You have bought a great deal then ?"

ARABELLA. "Indeed we have. Every sort of thing. Garments great and small, parasols, bags, bonnets, handkerchiefs, knickknacks —"

RECTOR (raising his hand somewhat peremptorily). "Not quite so loud, my dear. You must try—ahem—to moderate your voice a little. I have something to say ; something has happened—I have had some bad news." (Stops, and looks at his daughter, who looks anxiously at him in return.)

ARABELLA (excitedly). "Bad news ! How ? What ? From whom ?"

RECTOR. "Of course we half expected it. Poor Susan's husband —"

ARABELLA. "Dear me !" (Pauses.) "But still it is only in India. I am very sorry ; but —"

RECTOR. "As I merely saw it in the papers, there is still some hope that I may be mistaken."

ARABELLA. "Mistaken ? Oh, no. People never are mistaken that way. You may depend upon it you were in the right. Well, I am really grieved—poor Susan—and the worst of it is that Jay's was the one and only place we did not go near to-day. Not one single, solitary black thing did I buy." (Leaves the room.)

RECTOR. "She is utterly heartless."

SOPHIA. "No, papa, not that ; only so much taken up by the one thought that she has no room left for any other. These sales ——" (RECTOR *curbs an undrical exclamation*). "She will be quieter to-morrow, and able to show her better self."

The morrow comes. RECTOR enters the ladies' room with a cheerful step.

RECTOR. "All right ! I was mistaken, and I am most heartily rejoiced at it. These newspaper telegrams are a perfect nuisance, and one never knows what they really mean. It was another Mr. Smith altogether. So now, Arabella, I suppose you will congratulate yourself that you did not go to Jay's—or whatever the name is—and be able to enjoy your purchases."

ARABELLA (*looking rather foolish*). "Dear me, brother, I wish I had known earlier, for you gave me such a fright that I ——"

RECTOR. "That you—well ?"

ARABELLA. "I sold the whole pack to Lady Clipshift, half-price, this morning."

RECTOR. "This morning !"

SOPHIA. "Half-price !"

ARABELLA (*recovering herself*). "Half-price, taking one with another. She would not have some without all—I told her how matters lay—we roughly reckoned up the whole, and she very kindly agreed to take it off my hands ; and uncommonly lucky I thought myself, to get off so cheap."

SOPHIA. "The purchases you made only yesterday !"

ARABELLA. "It is no matter. The sales are still on. I do not regret a single thing ; for successful as we were yesterday, I feel quite convinced that we shall be still more successful—to-morrow."



WHEN !

WHEN I am young again I'll hoard my bliss,
 Nor dream that inexhaustible it is,
 Remembering old age comes after this,
 Joy grows to pain ;
 Nor waste one moment of youth's rose-sweet hours,
 Nor trample one of all its countless flowers,
 But drink the summer sun and soft spring showers,
 When I am young again !

I will be wise with wisdom dearly won
 By those who through life's wood have nearly run,
 Learn what to do, or what to leave undone,
 Dare or refrain ;
 I will not seek into my mouth to take
 The bitter apple of the acrid lake ;
 But at clear fountains all my thirsts will slake,
 When I am young again !

I will not brush the bloom to reach the core,
 Remembering how it chanced with me before,
 And bloom, once lost, returns not any more—
 Hard cores remain :—
 I will fence round with prudence, and secure
 A lasting bloom whose freshness shall endure ;
 Oh, I will guard my peach of youth, be sure,
 When I am young again !

When I am young again I'll spend no breath
 In bitter words the heart remembereth,
 When bitterness is swallowed up by Death
 Holding sole reign ;
 I'll love so well that if they pass to sleep
 Before me, I shall have no watch to keep
 Over their tears—only my tears to weep,
 When I am young again !

I will not lightly joy, nor idly grieve,
 Nor for a heaven itself one soul deceive,
 Nor will I be deceived, vainly believe,
 Nor love in vain !
 Come back, lost youth ! Oh, Fate, that one gift give ;
 Then I will show that I have learned to live.
 Youth shall be wise, and two and two make five,
 When I am young again !

E. NESBIT.

UNDER NORTHERN SKIES.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND," &c.



RUNCIC STONE.

THERE was nothing in Allinge to call for special attention. We felt that in leaving the calm and dignified repose of the ruins of Hammershus, we had sacrificed much to time and necessity.

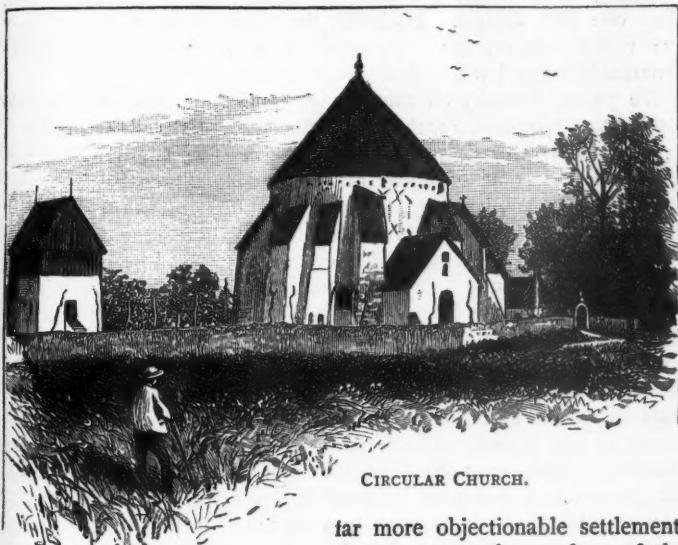
Once settled at the inn that evening, we sauntered out to reconnoitre. Very little repaid us for our pains. There was an ordinary and commonplace look about the place. The very air seemed hot and stifling; unwholesome and confined. Built on the island slopes,

the free winds of heaven had not sufficient play here. A wind blowing off the sea from the west was the only wind to which they seemed exposed. It was relaxing and depressing. The very men lounging about looked limp and lazy; the few women were loud and untidy. No doubt the more respectable and the quieter had their homes and occupations to attend to and were invisible, unheard. These women were the wives and sweethearts of the fishermen, looking on at the boats, wrangling and laughing amongst each other, taking life as they found it, and letting the world roll on as it would.

The shades of night were gathering. Out on the water one saw nothing but a great dark expanse domed by a star-spangled sky. The small lighthouse had set up its beacon, which threw a track of light upon the water beneath. A few fishing boats were preparing their nets and getting ready to put out to sea. Sounds of music still came from those open windows; forms flitted about the lighted rooms; everyone, in doors or out, was enjoying himself in his own way. Up the slopes, lights gleamed from small houses. There were narrow turnings one hardly cared to enter. Not that they looked formidable or numerous, or even burglarious, but dirty and suffocating; no ventilation within doors, closeness without. The people, men and women, looked at us, and passed their remarks. There

was a crowded, crushed feeling about this little town, Allinge, a want of air and space. Any longer sojourn than one night would hardly have been tolerable.

The morning came, and in its early freshness Allinge looked less objectionable than it had seemed last night. Darkness and shadows had disappeared. In broad sunlight, even the narrow thoroughfares lost their close, uncanny feeling. And the sea stretched out like a sapphire far as the eye could reach, sleeping, flashing in the sunshine. Last night we had had a star-gemmed sky, this morning we had a star-gemmed-sea. This would have reconciled us to a far worse spot than Allinge ; would have purified—we had almost said sanctified—a



CIRCULAR CHURCH.

far more objectionable settlement.
Away out on the surface of the

water was the small island of Christiansö, a mere fortification, looking white and beautiful, calm and hazy, like a cloud resting upon a painted ocean.

All this we saw whilst breakfast was preparing at the hands of the bustling maiden, who helped one to the sweets of life in the form of delicious honey, and stimulated one's nervous system with coffee of the finest brew. Even Allinge had its good points in these small luxuries and refinements, which play no inconsiderable part in making life bearable.

Nevertheless, we were not sorry to turn our backs upon the little place. Man is not always as grateful as he might be. Small mercies seldom stir up great emotions, though they make up largely the sum and substance of existence. Very often, if we only knew it, we turn our backs in this calm, deliberate manner upon what would have

proved life's turning point, life's happiness, the flowing of fortune's tide. The fat old landlady had received us on her steps, and on her steps dismissed us. Between whiles she had been invisible, and on these occasions appeared and disappeared, erect and motionless, as if wound up for the ordeal.

We passed upwards out of the town, and, for a time, lost the sea ; our road lay inland. We were approaching the most beautiful and luxuriant part of the island ; a small paradise of fertility, with groves of waving trees and fields of golden corn. It seemed as if one had only to tell things to grow and they did so. The intense heat of the sun was tempered by a refreshing breeze. The blue sky overhead, across which a few fleecy clouds now and then hurried, filled one with delight. Had the thermometer been up to 212° one would scarcely have quarrelled with it in a summer chiefly remarkable for its low temperature.

We passed through all this happy, smiling country, occasionally coming to a farm-house with great barns and buildings that spoke of a prosperity which here seems uninterrupted. The hay was all cut in the fields, and some of it was carried, and some was being made : the makers happy, laughing, singing in lightness of heart. Here, it seemed, we had come upon fields Elysian, where care and sorrow entered not, and people rejoiced in eternal youth and beauty ; a land flowing with milk and honey, corn and wine—red, sparkling wine of which one might take deep deep draughts : refreshing, exhilarating ; never sense or soul stealing.

We presently came upon one of the circular churches for which Bornholm is famous, which carry us back nearly a thousand years in the world's history, to the days when Christianity was first known in the island. These quaint churches do more to give a distinctive character to the island than almost anything else. On this flat ground they are seen for considerable distances ; landmarks of singular aspect. In early days they served as fortified towers, when religion was another name for war and persecution, and long and jealous conflicts were going on for the mastery between church and state. Tall, circular towers are they to-day, with white-washed walls glistening in the sun, standing out in contrast with the black, wooden, pointed roofs above them.

The church was surrounded by a quiet grave-yard, with small wooden crosses, where the dead rest under green mounds, often flower strewn : rest after life's calm and even tenour, as it seems to run in Bornholm. It appears to be nothing but a long, quiet, pastoral symphony. Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses ; simple, contented rustics playing Corydon to a yet simpler Phyllis. I daresay we exaggerated it all, but such was the effect upon us of all this peace and sunshine, these waving fields of golden corn, this clover-scented air mixing with the sweet scent of the new mown hay.

In the church there had recently been a wedding. All down the

little aisle, bunches of heather and flowers were propped in the old-fashioned pews, just as the holly used to be propped in our own churches at Christmas—and may still be found here and there in districts where time has stood still, and people are yet delightfully simple and refreshing. Here, to-day, the church was loaded with flowers and heather, and decorated with a green arch under which the happy pair must have passed out upon a world henceforth to be fairer than ever to them. The flowers, dead and drooping, looked sad, emblems as they were of mortality.

When I remember all
The friends so linked together,
I've seen around me fall
Like leaves in wintry weather;
I feel like one who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed.

Unbidden, the words came uppermost ; they had no business to do so. There ought to be nothing here suggestive of sadness, and probably farthest from sadness were this happy Phyllis and Corydon. The altar rails were also loaded with decorations, and the rude chandelier suspended from the ceiling. It all relieved the heaviness of the interior, which, though no doubt quaint and singular, was not beautiful.

The old sexton or clerk, who kept the keys, was anxious to show us the belfry and the bells, of which he seemed as proud as if they had been a regalia. He begged us to try the tones, and there went ringing out upon the still air a startling peal. The Vicarage was hard by, and if the good parson was at home, he would know well what it meant. Not an alarm of fire ; or of an enemy approaching by sea to take captive the flourishing island ; not a passing bell to tell of a soul winging its flight to eternal regions ; but merely his old clerk—he must have been eighty at least—showing off his treasures in pride and fulness of heart. There appeared no one else to terrify. The broad fields around were deserted. Far off, through the opened shutters, one caught sight of the shimmering sapphire sea. Below, at the little gate of the church, our Jehu was stretched lazily upon his box, indifferent to bells and circular churches and life in general. There was neither romance nor simplicity about him. But then he came from Rönne, the capital of Bornholm : and Rönne was the least interesting spot in all the island.

We left it all behind us. The church with its dead emblems of happiness ; the bells, on which we had rung a peal for very joy ; the Vicarage, with the Vicar at a window, staring at us with a kindly smile, and making us a polite bow as we departed, wishing us, we felt quite sure, God speed in his heart ; the old custodian who,

saw us off the premises, like a faithful warden true to his trust ; the groves of trees that bent to the breeze, perhaps whispered of the happy ceremony they had lately witnessed, and cast a grateful shade from the burning glare of the sun, not yet up to its meridian. We left all this behind us and continued our way.

We were now making for what is supposed to be the prettiest part of the island—Dyndalen. Presently, a gentle descent towards the sea coast, amidst wooded and luxuriant slopes, and we had reached our morning's halting-place. A goodly-sized inn, shut out from the high road, surrounded by gardens and orchards, and a wooded valley given up to everything wild and beautiful in forest life. Here we bid farewell to that solitude and repose that had distinguished our morning drive. This spot was evidently the centre of attraction in the island. A long table in the dining-room—nay, in several rooms—covered with cloths that had once been white, but were now occupied with an army of flies, living and dead, testified to the number of visitors staying here or expected to arrive. From somewhere or other there came a sound of ninepins—a vulgar discord that had no place in the harmony of this refined little island. Voices raised in laughter smote the air ; girls were singing ; others were playing croquet.

We quickly left it all. Left the horses to their repose, Jehu to don a working blouse, and stable and groom his cattle, and take his pleasure : and went down towards the sea, through lovely, laughing slopes and wooded undulations, all gilded and glowing with sunshine, all reposing under the bluest of skies.

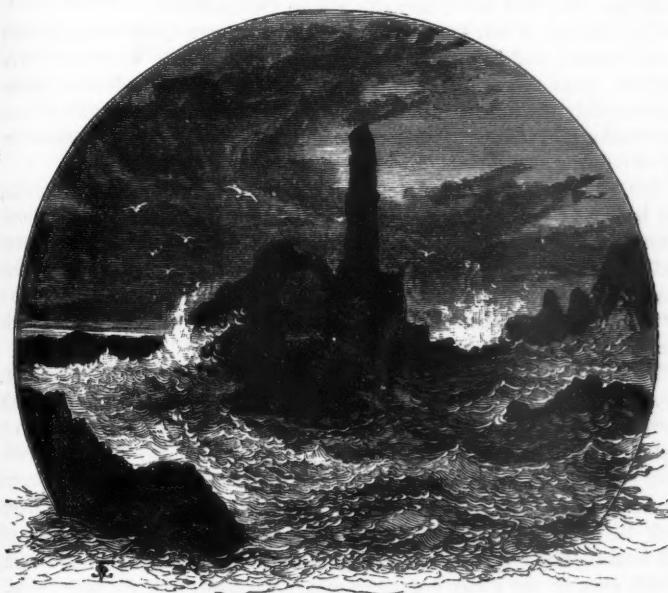
Oh, the cherry trees that gladdened us, and tantalised us, and delayed us on our way ! Such immense trees we had never seen, or such an abundance of fruit ; trees literally groaning with the weight of their delicious burdens. But nearly all the fruit was out of reach. We had to look and long. There was no ladder at hand ; no monkeys to pelt us with cherries instead of cocoanuts ; no possibility of climbing. We invented all sorts of manœuvres ; lassoes that were just too short ; leaps that just touched fruit-laden branches, only to spring back minus a leaf, plus a disappointment. It was no use. We met two or three people coming up as we were going down. They had conscious looks and black lips, and evidently had found out a secret way of reaching the forbidden fruit. Why not we ?

We passed on to the sea and another Jacob's ladder : a rough, picturesque, beautiful descent into a small, rocky, romantic cove. We jumped from one rock to another until we reached an old man and a boat : the Old Man of the Sea, perhaps. But the tables were turned. He did not take us prisoners—we detained him ; not longer than he bargained for, but longer than others bargained for, as we presently discovered.

He pushed away from the rocks into the open water. Calm as it was, scarcely a ripple upon its dark blue flashing surface, yet it broke

boisterously amongst the rocks ; broke and beat and foamed and threw its white spray around. Up on the land, looking out from a distance, we should have said so much surf was impossible.

The rocks were beautiful and broken ; high and rugged and wild. There were small recesses, that might almost have become harbours, given over to the seagulls ; rocks honeycombed with the influence of time and water and weather ; caves and natural arches, into which we passed for a moment, out from the heat and glare of the sun, the sparkling water, into a chilling gloom.



NEAR DYNDALEN.

We paddled backwards and forwards, in and out of these rocky recesses, rejoicing in the wild freedom, the perfect solitude ; revelling in the splash and dash of the waves, mingled with the cry and clang of the seagulls. Then the old boatman went the other way, and where the rocks gave place to a shelving beach, above which a wooded valley ran up into the land, he put us on shore. It was not the easiest task in the world. Broken rocks were all about, and the water splashed and broke over them like a small tempest.

Putting us on shore, he went off again into smooth places, and rested on his oars. We went up the Dyndalen. A beautiful wood with trees, young and old, all shadow and sunshine, leaves glinting and rustling ; paths moss grown, strewn with ferns and wild flowers. The silence was perfect. Not a bird chirped ; even the splash of the sea could

not be heard—lost, perhaps, in the rustle of the leaves : a forest sound that never breaks the forest silence, but makes it seem more palpable. Not a human being was visible ; there was no trace of well-trodden paths to mark the presence of man ; nothing but soft moss spread like a rich carpet under one's feet. Here and there a squirrel ran across, and up a tree, and looked down impudently at us from an overhanging bough, with black, sparkling eyes and curled-up tail : dark-brown little creatures, beautiful and graceful, but wild as wild could be. They would not come at our bidding. We had not Thoreau's gift to charm them.

The skipper of our steamer had said there were spots in Bornholm in which one could linger days. It was quite true. We could have lingered days here, perhaps weeks. These sylvan solitudes were inexpressibly charming, and might be varied by the solitude of sea and rocks and caves, almost more charming still. Here nature in all her forms and phases, all her beauty, was at her best.

But to linger was not for us, who counted our time by moments, not by days or even hours. We lingered as long as possible in these sunny glades, these whispering trees through which the sun glinted and made pictures upon the mossy paths. Then we went down to the beach, half doubting. Had we tried the old boatman's patience too far ? Would he have departed, and left us to find our way back overland, through brake and briar ?

No ; there was the good old weatherbeaten figure, still resting on its oars, calm as Patience smiling at Grief. He evidently ~~felt~~ there was nothing else for it, but when we appeared he roused up with energy, and steered in amongst the rocks with no little trouble. The sea was even more plashing and boisterous than it had been an hour ago. We had to perform impossible feats in jumping from rock to rock, slippery and sliding as small icebergs, until we reached the boat. Then he pushed out again, and in the broad, smooth sea, in full view of the rocky coast, we returned to our first starting point.

On the rocks at the bottom of Jacob's ladder, gesticulating and impatient, a noisy group awaited our return. How long they had been there, "standing in dangerous paths," we knew not. We selfishly consoled ourselves with the thought that we had not had to wait, to whom time was precious and moments were golden. As we landed and gave place, we felt—for we did not look—that the group glared upon us. Yet we were not guilty of intent. How could we tell that others were waiting ? or that there was only one boat for all requirements ? As for the old boatman, a substantial fee made him our champion for ever. So we departed with a light heart and a free conscience.

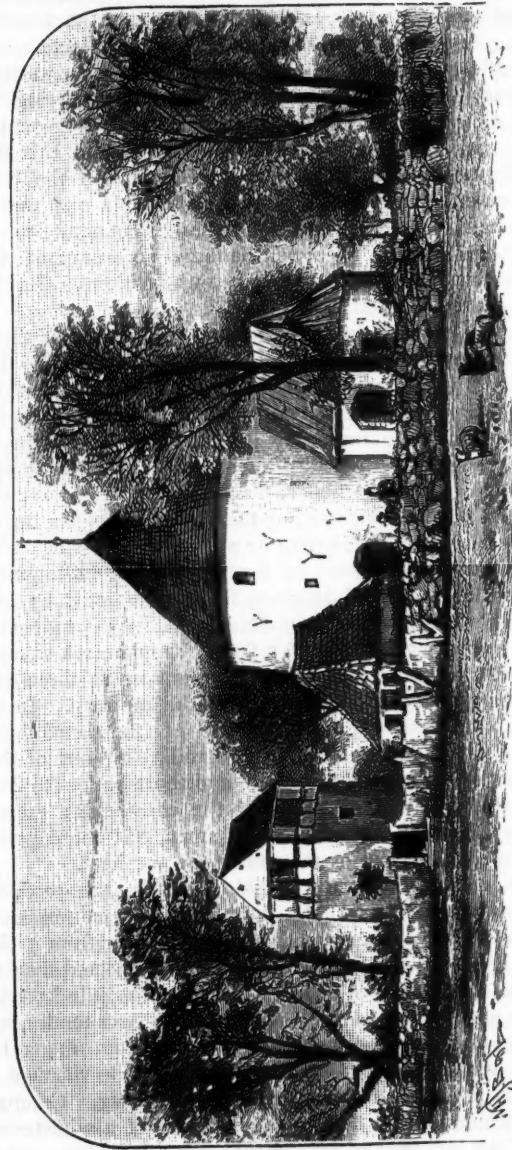
We set out once more in the early afternoon. The beauty of the day was uninterrupted. The character of the scenery did not change. The island is very flat about here, except immediately on the sea coast, where—as at Dyndalen—we have seen that it falls

away in hills and valleys, laughing, fertile and wooded, and terminates in wild and rugged rocks. Inland, the aspect is the exact opposite to all this. It is a pastoral scene of peace and plenty. A succession of fields, well cultivated and productive. The waving corn is conspicuous ; the flowering clover, and the hay drying upon the meadows, delight the senses. Straight, white roads intersect the fields ; roads well made and well kept, as everything is in this flourishing island. Bornholm is a wonderfully green oasis in the midst of a desert of water. Yet its attractions are so simple and unpretending that one must be keenly sensitive to the beauties of nature to appreciate and feel its influence. There will be found no excitement to awaken violent emotions in a single acre of the whole island. Its charms are of quite a different description.

On our way this afternoon, we passed the largest of the circular churches in Bornholm, forming quite a small settlement. There was the bell tower near it, which, of course, we mounted. But the keeper of these treasures, the sexton, whether old or young we could not tell, was absent. He was away in the fields, haymaking, and had been good enough to leave all doors open for the benefit of strayers and strangers. In his absence, the bells had rest. We thought it wiser not to ring a peal, startling the air, and bringing up the good man to see what had gone wrong or who was trespassing. The view from the tower well repaid us for our trouble in mounting ; disclosed a wide surface of laughing fields, intersected by long white roads, and here and there a farm house with its dependencies, larger and more important than itself, a far off sapphire sea shimmering in the sunshine, as broad and full and warm now at three o'clock in the afternoon as it had been at ten in the morning. In the midst of the sea, the small island and refuge of Christiansö looked like a cloud hardly bigger than a man's hand rising out of the water. Groves and plantations of trees here and there broke the flat surface of Bornholm, and the monotony of the corn-fields : green waving avenues delicious for the eye to rest upon, still more grateful and delicious to pass into out of the sun's glare and heat.

Just below was the vicarage, outside the little grave-yard, separated from it by a garden stocked with roses. It was very difficult to restrain the wish to enter and keep one's hands from picking and stealing. Probably, no one would less have objected than the good Vicar. But for want of courage, or for want of a little knowledge, we miss many good things in life. A conscience over tender, and to be righteous over much, inevitably debars one from many things in this world that would otherwise be lawful. The vicarage, like the church, was white, and looked cool and inviting. Creepers hung about the windows, and flowers within spoke of a ministering spirit, sensible of the influence of refinement. The house was quite imposing, and seemed almost larger than the church, if not so lofty.

As usual, in the grave-yard were more small wooden crosses than



CIRCULAR CHURCH.

marble monuments, and the dead seemed to sleep more calmly under the green mounds than under cold and formal stones. Daisies grew above them, and flowers bloomed. There was a newly-made grave, evidently just prepared to receive one whose quiet annals were closed. In such quiet it hardly seemed that anyone could die, hardly that there was anyone to die. At the end of the grave-yard was a small building that looked like a mortuary chapel, but on going round it proved to be the good Vicar's coach-house. The doors were open, and the gig was reposing shafts downwards. With this, no doubt, he perambulated the island, and paid his pastoral and social visits. The horse was absent, probably grazing in some neighbouring field, growing fat and lazy with the abundance of good things that fell to his lot in this cornucopia state of existence, this modern land of Canaan.

How quiet and still it all was. What a strange, calm, uneventful life to lead in the eyes of those whose lines are cast amidst the busy haunts of men. How different the one's thoughts, feelings and emotions from the other's; what different stakes are being played for, what different aspirations, ambitions. If the good Vicar here was not an emblem of worth and virtue, where could they be found? It is very well to say that human nature is the same all the world over. Born the same it may be, but the temptations of the world are reduced to their lowest minimum in these far-away corners of the earth, where the seasons run their quiet course, and seed time and harvest are the great events of life's calendar.

Leaving the church almost reluctantly, we presently came to one of the most curious spots—perhaps the most curious spot—in all the island. A strange grove, dating back to pre-historic times. We had to turn out of our way for it, for it lies out of the direct route. Outside the little gate admitting to the charmed circle, a small party had encamped upon the grass. Their horse was grazing and their cart was at rest; they had boiled a kettle with sticks, and were enjoying themselves in a quiet way. Not a sound came from them to disturb the sacred silence of the grove. The very nod with which they greeted us in their country fashion as we passed was given in absolute silence. They might have been dumb as the stones on which we presently gazed.

We passed through the little gate into the shelter and shadow of the pine trees. Dark and melancholy was the effect. We were in a new world, or rather in an old one, gazing on ancient remains. Runic stones standing upright, with a few records and inscriptions; and mounds, where no doubt the dead lay in the rest and repose of untold centuries. The far off dead, barbarous and heathen, who worshipped here according to their lights.

The paths ran round in circles, intersected by shorter paths and devices, with the puzzling turnings of a maze whose meanings were lost to mankind. Small mounds rose here and there with fortifications.

All about, visible through the trees, were the upright runic stones. The melancholy pines cast long shadows. The sunbeams penetrating this mysterious grove almost seemed to lose their brightness and warmth. A strange atmosphere, solemn and weird, penetrated the place through and through, cast its spell upon mind and spirit. One seemed chain-bound by its influence, as if the spirits of those who had walked and worshipped in these groves yet hovered about them. The very rustling of the pine trees above our heads seemed charged with voices of an unknown tongue. The very shadows, deeply marked between the intervening sun spaces, might have been shades of the departed, that would presently lift and flit to and fro, and fill the groves with the mystery of the supernatural. It seemed impossible to leave the spot. Gloomy and mysterious and depressing, it yet had a strange power to charm, which seemed to steal over the senses like the subtle fumes of a deadly nightshade. It was not a healthy influence, but it was difficult to resist.

Here, in these groves, in those unknown ages, overshadowed by trees such as these, the heathen rites of a mysterious religion were celebrated to the invisible and the imaginary. Rude sacrifices, immolations at the altar of superstition, were offered up in a vain propitiation. We had never before found a spot where all this was so wonderfully realised. It is doubtful whether such another exists.

The remains of Stonehenge, those great ruins on Salisbury Plain, cleaving the sky with sharp outlines, in that desolate moor, where nothing else seems to stand between them and the eternity of space, appeared powerless to impress the mind in comparison with the groves and stones and mounds and circles of Louiselund. The one is a ruin and a remains, requiring a key to its interpretation : the other might have been in full possession of rites and ceremonials only an hour ago. It might still be warm with the blood of sacrifice, still echoing with the cry of a victim.

The whole was surrounded by a thick, high hedge, which still more separated the grove from the outer world. Beyond that hedge, fields of waving corn stretched far away on the one side, bathed in sunshine. They seemed out of place, unneeded. We were under the spell of Louiselund. Life ought to be visionary and spiritual. The grosser wants of the body had no place here. Existence was supported without food : time was not marked by moments and hours.

We sat and absorbed the influence in spite of ourselves. Sat upon a sacred mound and dreamed dreams, and imagined the air full of spiritual influences about to claim us for their own. Our past life was over, remembrance was dying out, the world as we had known it was fading. A torpor was creeping over our senses ; our nerves vibrated like a harp of a thousand strings struck by unseen hands. We were powerless to move. The shadows lengthened and the sun went downwards, and still we moved not. How long we should have

remained I know not, but presently Jehu, growing anxious or impatient, came quietly through and searched us out. The spell was broken. He brought us back to earthly and present things with the shock of one who is suddenly awakened. But it was a very necessary awakening. We would not have fallen under the spell of those unseen influences, whatever they might be—for I verily believe that some uncanny and mysterious power claims for its own those who have the temerity to wander within its sacred groves. Like the labours of Sisyphus, you might—not roll a stone, but wander round and round those magic circles, chained to their orbit with sure mesmeric tyranny.

We passed out from the old world of superstition and heathenism into the healthier light and influence of the new. The group upon the grassy slopes were exactly as we had first found them. They had ended their Arcadian feast, but had not stirred. Probably the eloquence and good fellowship of Jehu had enchainèd them: just as a more subtle influence had kept us spellbound within the groves of Louiselund. But if, as Caliban says, they had "filled the isle with noises, and sweet airs that gave delight and hurt not," they must have been very hushed and subdued, for we had heard no sound. Either this, or in those charmed groves our spirits had actually taken flight into the mysterious regions of the unseen.

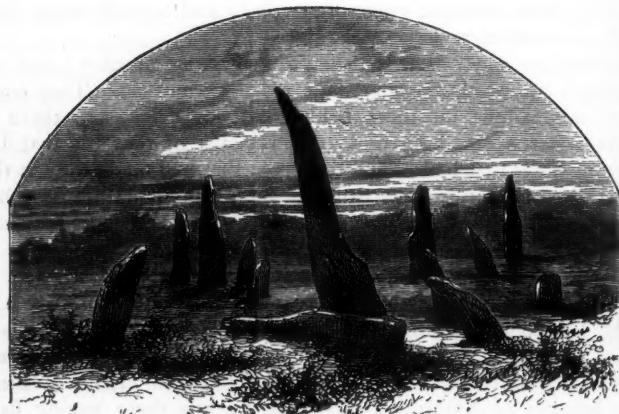
We went our way. The picnic group gave us another silent nod at parting: no word, no smile, not moving a muscle. They could not be automatons, for these neither eat nor drink, and there on the grass was a small charred ring, remains of the fire that had burnt the sticks that had boiled the kettle that had made the tea that automatons could not have drunk. With the departure of Jehu's fascinations, they probably would figuratively fold their tent and seek fresh pastures.

We were bound for Svanike, a small town on the coast, and, for Bornholm, an important town. We reached it about an hour after leaving Louiselund, passing through the same characteristic, placid scenery, which chanted us one long pastoral symphony as we went. A symphony addressed to the bounties of Earth, a Hymn of Praise to the beauties of Nature. Everywhere we saw these waving fields ripening to harvest. At one large farmhouse, an immense waggon was turning in, literally groaning under its weight of hay. Men were at work in the yard, housing another load in the great barns, sending it with huge pitch-forks into the open mouth of a great loft that greedily refused to be satisfied.

We passed on, getting nearer and nearer to the sea, which, in front of us, shone like a flashing sapphire. One is never tired of the comparison. How can we have too much sunshine and blue skies and seas; and fresh, glorious breezes, gladdening the smiling earth, and rustling and glistening amongst the forest branches, and filling one with happiness and exhilaration? How can one have too much

of influences that have so often reasserted and restored life to the dying; convinced and conquered many a doubting spirit, and brought it back to the faith of its early youth? We cannot have too much of them even in visions; would we could ever have them before us as realities.

A descent towards the sea coast; a small town ahead of us, which for the moment looked a collection of roofs and nothing more; a nearer approach revealing a very picturesque and quaint little town, with streets and shops that seemed quite to eclipse the capital; a quiet air of prosperity; gardens full of roses; a quaint church upon a hill, and a graveyard literally flower laden; an hotel partly covered with ivy, well organised, and owned by the most charming and delightful landlady in the world, whose manners and appearance were too refined for the task of receiving and satisfying all sorts and conditions of travellers; a harbour and pier before the windows, and the glorious sea stretching beyond. Such was Svanike, and we felt that for that evening our lines had again fallen in pleasant places.



RUNIC STONES.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

A TRUE INCIDENT OF THE IRISH TROUBLES.

PEOPLE say there is no such thing as liberality among the Scotch, truth amongst the Welsh, or loyalty amongst the Irish. Of the Scotch and Welsh I have no personal knowledge, and I cannot believe so sweeping an accusation, but I do know something as to the loyalty of the Irish. Loyalty, I mean, not to the Crown, but to their employers.

One incident in my usually quiet life brings out so strongly the devotion of an Irish girl to her mistress that I cannot help thinking there will be both interest and profit in the story, even told in the simple way that I am able to relate it.

In the year 1881, I, being then a slip of a girl of eighteen, living in a quiet Devonshire home, was wooed and married. My husband was a captain in a line regiment, and, shortly after our marriage, his battalion being ordered to Ireland, I, of course, went with him. No sense of danger ever troubled me, for as long as he was with me what had I to fear?

On arriving in Ireland my husband's company was sent on detachment to an insignificant little village rejoicing in the name of Ballybreen. The small barrack the soldiers were quartered in afforded no accommodation for me. I did not require much room, but here there was absolutely none. There was no hotel or inn of any description in the place above the rank of a beer-shop, so that when Hugh was told of a small house about three quarters of a mile from the barracks, which was advertised to be let furnished, we went to inspect it, and finally settled down there.

Myrtle Cottage, as it was called, was a pretty, two-storied house, covered with creepers, standing on rather high ground overlooking a stream, which the natives of these parts delighted in dignifying by the name of river. The cottage stood completely alone; there was no other building of any sort within half a mile of it in any direction.

We lived at Myrtle Cottage with great contentment for several months. Our household consisted of two servants. An elderly woman was cook, whose name was O'Shea, and who seemed a quiet, hard-working woman. She seldom entered into conversation with me, but on the few occasions on which we had any talk together outside household matters she tried to give me an impression of the past glories of the O'Sheas, and once or twice hinted darkly that there would be a good time coming yet, when the reign of the Sassenachs should be over. I was not much interested in her, and only laughed at her fancies.

As housemaid we had a young girl named Nelly Farren, an

exceedingly pretty, bright, and pleasant girl. She was engaged to a son of a neighbouring farmer, one Tim Doolan, of whom she prattled to me on the least encouragement. He was rather above her in position, but Nelly was so pleasant and pretty that his father and mother had not the heart to put a veto on the match, and only made it a condition that she should try to save a little money in service before they set up housekeeping together. Besides these two women servants, my husband's soldier-servant was employed about the house, but the cottage was so small that there was no bed-room for him, and he had to sleep in an outhouse. He was a stolid Englishman with little in common with the Irish people about him.

It was a disagreeable time for soldiers in Ireland then, for they were often called upon to assist the civil police at evictions, or in dispersing some traitorous or seditious meeting.

Much as my husband disliked this kind of work it had to be done. Unfortunately, one day when his company was helping the police in evicting a small farmer who would not pay any rent, he was called upon by the magistrate to fire on the crowd. One volley was quite enough to disperse them, but that one volley had severely wounded one of the foremost men among the assembled land-leaguers.

This man, Pat Henessy by name, was so seriously hurt that he was believed by his companions to have been killed, and the man who picked him up, before carrying him away, turned to my husband and with a threatening look and gesture, said : "The year won't be out till ye'll rue this day's work."

I did not of course hear this at the time, but subsequent events recalled the matter to Hugh's mind and he then told me about it.

For another month our life went on uneventfully, and then my husband received orders to march the greater part of his company to a place some ten miles away. This would involve his remaining out all night ; he could not hope to return before the following afternoon.

It was our first separation, and though I tried to make light of it, I could not get over a sense of impending trouble. I was horribly afraid, though I knew not of what. But I did my best to hide all sign of alarm from my husband, and laughed at the idea of feeling nervous.

I made the best of it, and Hugh started off early in the afternoon.

I kept my tears back until he had left the house, and then broke down ; but soon rallying myself for being so foolish, I called Nelly to come out with me for a little into the garden. We stood on the slope of the hill, looking down on the village, less than a mile away. In this lonely place it was some comfort to think that there were some English soldiers left in the barracks.

Between us and the village rushed the little river, now in full flood, for there had been heavy rains that autumn. A little pathway, hardly more than a sheep track, led direct from Myrtle Cottage into

the village and close up to the barracks. This track crossed the river by what was usually a very shallow ford, but now, in the swollen state of the stream, was hardly a ford at all. The regular road led by a circuit of about a quarter of a mile to an old stone bridge, and so into the village.

Nelly looking into my face saw that I had been crying, and tried to comfort me by saying :

"Don't be onaisy, ma'am ! sure the last words the masther said to me just now was, 'Take care of your mistress, Nelly,' and it's myself that will do that same to the last drop of my blood. 'Twill be no time at all, ma'am, till he is back again. I'll make you a good cup of tay, and if ye'll go to bed airly, ma'am, ye'll sleep as sound as a child."

Getting some little comfort from the bright, cheerful look of her sweet face, I turned into the house again, determined to make myself as busy as possible to pass away the time rapidly, till I could reasonably hope to get to sleep.

Before it became quite dark I looked carefully to all the locks and fastenings of the doors and windows, and ascertained that the soldier servant was in his room. I went to bed early, recommended the servants to retire also, and was soon, notwithstanding a nervous feeling, fast asleep.

I was awakened—it seemed to me almost immediately, though I afterwards ascertained that it was at one o'clock—by a confused murmur of voices outside the house and the trampling of many feet. I arose in terror, and just then Nelly rushed into my room, her face as white as a sheet.

"Oh, mistress, what will we do ! what will we do ! The Laguers are upon us," she exclaimed.

I hardly understood her at first, but soon made out that a crowd of land leaguers had surrounded the house and were prepared to attack it. Why, I could not imagine, but was soon to learn.

I put on some clothes as quickly as possible, and tried to decide what I ought to do. My only hope lay in the soldier servant. I took Nelly with me and crept to a window at the back of the house which looked on the outhouses, from which I hoped to see into the man's room, and perhaps communicate with him.

To my horror I saw that he on whom we depended for protection was lying bound hand and foot in the back-yard, and two villainous-looking men, with blackened faces and torches in their hands, were standing over him. All hope of any succour from him was out of the question.

The only thing to be done now was to brace up our courage, speak to the men, try to find out what they wanted, and how best I could conciliate them.

I went back to my bedroom window, threw up the sash, and, leaning out a little, gazed on the strange scene before me.

There were perhaps a hundred men assembled in the little garden.

The flame of half a dozen torches threw a lurid and uncertain light over the restless crowd. More than half of the men's faces were blackened, and many of them carried bludgeons. I could not be sure whether there were any firearms, but fancied I could distinguish the gleam of a gun barrel here and there in the torch light.

"What do you all want?" I called out as loudly as I could. "My husband is not here. Why do you come in this way and frighten us defenceless women in the middle of the night?"

"Shure we know that," cried a harsh voice out of the crowd. "We know the captain is away on the devil's business; but we owe him one for shooting Pat Henessy, and we're going to take it out of you in revenge. Come out here till we talk to ye."

"Oh, mistress," cried Nelly, "shut down the window or they'll shoot you."

Seeing I was doing no good by talking to them, I closed and fastened the window, and retired with Nelly inside the room.

"What are we to do now?" I whispered.

"There is only one thing, ma'am: I must creep out and go across to the barracks and bring the sojers. Keep a good heart, mistress, dear, and I'll be back in no time. I'll go right across the stream, and sure it's less than a mile. Put me out at the drawing-room window, through the glass room where the flowers do be, and ye'll fasten it up again safe, and sure no one will know anything till I get back."

I went down stairs with her quietly and without a light, softly opened the window into the conservatory and let her out.

"'Tis little my life will be worth if they catch a sight of me," said she, "but 'tis our only chance, and I promised the master I would take care of ye. May the blessed Virgin protect me! Good-bye, mistress, dear. Ye'll tell the master I did my best, if so be as they catch me."

Before she passed through the outer door she turned to me and whispered: "Don't put too much trust in Mrs. O'Shea, ma'am; I wouldn't."

"What do you mean, Nelly?" I said. "Why can't she be trusted?"

"I wouldn't trust none who has a son among them moonlighters."

And then she passed into the darkness. Luckily she had on a dark dress, and was hardly visible in the gloom of the night. I fastened up the door and window securely, and went back into the house trembling with fear. Nelly's last words had frightened me more than anything else. I had now absolutely no one to trust to for protection, or even counsel.

The next half hour was a time of agony. Every moment I fancied the ruffians outside were about to break into the house. They might have done so at any minute, but fortunately for me I had friends even among that crowd. I overheard a few words which showed me that there was disagreement amongst them.

"Come, lads ! 'tis fooling we are ; we must get her out anny way ; so break in the door. With a will, now !"

"Stop, boys, stop !" called out another voice ; " ye must remember Nelly is in there, and she is not to be hurt; mind that now. Begorra ! I'll be the death of the first man that lays a finger on her."

I could hear no more distinctly, but amongst the confused noise the voice of the man who had spoken of Nelly sounded hard and threatening. I concluded that this must be Nelly's lover, Tim Doolan, and it comforted me a little to think there might be some assistance to be hoped for from him.

Every now and then the night air would resound with a wild yell, and deep curses were called down upon the head of my absent husband.

The minutes passed on slowly, but I tried to comfort myself with the thought that rescue might yet come in time. I then bethought me of Mrs. O'Shea. She would probably be in the kitchen. I went in to look. She must have gone upstairs. I went up noiselessly, and looked into the servants' room ; she was not there. I went on quickly to my bedroom, and stood at the door peering into the darkness. I heard someone moving, and knew it must be the cook. She passed round the bed to the other side, where stood always a little table on which I had placed all my keys when I went to bed, amongst them the key of the front door, which I had taken upstairs for greater security.

I saw the woman strike a match. She only allowed it to burn for five or six seconds, but in that time I saw her put out her hand and take up the big front-door key. What could she want with it ? I held my breath, and kept every faculty at its highest tension. She moved quietly and quickly to the window, against the pane of which the key in her hand rattled as she threw up the sash.

All of a sudden I understood her motive. She meant to throw out the key of the front door, and so let the men in. My mind was made up on the instant. I watched her narrowly until I saw that my opportunity had come.

As soon as she had opened the window, she leant out over the sill and called in a low tone :

"Larry, the kay ; the kay of the door : open it ye'rself but never say it was me."

As she swung her hand back, before throwing out the key, I sprang forward, snatched it away, and lifting her up sharply by the feet, sent her by a great effort of strength out of the window.

It seemed a terrible act, but what was I to do ? In the hands of this strong and determined woman I should have been powerless. Once she found herself discovered it would have been her life against mine. The act, terrible as it seemed, I have always looked upon as a sort of inspiration. She fell on the soft turf beneath, and perhaps was almost as much frightened as hurt. I may mention here that I

never saw or heard of her again. She left the neighbourhood, and it was supposed was conveyed by her friends to America.

As the time passed slowly on and still they did not actually break into the house my courage rose again. Surely, I thought, the soldiers will soon be here—if Nelly only got safe away.

I took up my station close to the door of the conservatory, ready to let Nelly in if she returned, and waited anxiously from minute to minute. At last, peering out into the darkness, I made out a figure stealing quietly up through the bushes. I saw that it was certainly the figure of a woman, and felt it must be Nelly.

As she came close up I was about to open the door to let her in when there was a flash of light followed instantaneously by the report of a gun close by, and the girl fell heavily at the threshold of the door.

Forgetting all precautions I sprang out, and in an instant had the girl in my arms, for it was indeed poor Nelly. She was in horrible agony, but she just managed to gasp out :

“ The sogers are here, mistress ; you are saved. Tell the master I saved you.”

I was about to try and carry her into the house, when a man sprang out of the bushes close by, calling out, in an agony of voice I shall never forget, “ Is it Nelly I’ve shot ? ” and flung himself on the ground in a transport of grief and horror. At the same instant the tramp of many feet moving at a fast pace was heard, and the word of command given to “ Fix bayonets.” I realised that I was saved ; and the cowardly crowd outside, crying out : “ The sogers ! the polis ! ” dispersed in all directions.

Tim Doolan—for it was indeed he who had fired the shot—helped me to carry Nelly into the house. We laid her on a sofa, and did all we could think of for her. Tim then told me, with many exclamations of grief and distress, that on Nelly’s account he had determined to try and prevent anyone getting into the house. He knew that the conservatory door was the weakest place, and was watching that when he saw a figure stealing up, and evidently going to enter. It was so dark that he could not distinguish the figure ; had no idea it was a woman’s ; and he believed, of course, that Nelly was inside with me. He fired deliberately, with the intention of stopping that person from entering ; fired with such fatal aim that she he loved best, and would have died to save, was dying by his hand.

We sent one of the police for a doctor, but he could not hope to bring him under half an hour. Even if he had been on the spot he could not have saved her life.

She spoke but little. Once she turned to me. “ I did my best, mistress, didn’t I ? ”

With bitter tears I assured her, over and over again, she had done as noble a deed as any man or woman that ever had lived, and that her memory should be held in sacred reverence by me and Hugh for all time.

"Good-bye, mistress, dear," she whispered.

I kissed the gentle face passionately, and went into another room, that she and her lover might say their long farewell with no outsider to interfere.

I sought out the sergeant in charge of the detachment of soldiers and gave him a few directions, and when I returned to Nelly's sofa, five minutes later, the faithful soul had passed to the God who gave it. Surely there was a rich reward in store somewhere for that true heart, "Faithful unto death."

Tim's grief and distress were most painful to witness, and I could not in any way help him, or attempt to give him consolation; so I left him to watch over the quiet form on the sofa, and tried to get some rest myself. Now that I was safe, and the need for bracing up my courage was over, the reaction came, and I passed from one fit of hysterics into another, till the poor troubled sergeant of the detachment thought, I believe, that I should certainly die.

However, he did the very best thing he could. He sent down into the village to the wife of the Head Constable of the police, and begged her to come up and take charge of me. She came, and never left me for a moment till the happy time came when, late in the afternoon, I was able to pour out all the story of my troubles, fears, and perils in the strong arms of him from whom I trusted I might never again be parted.

A NIGHT IN COLINDIA.

IT was very wrong, rash and illegal, nevertheless we did it. I wouldn't do it again, for I am certain that night has shortened my life, and if I narrate here a few of the incidents we met with it is simply as a warning to any of my readers against leaving the beaten paths of everyday life and virtue.

Will Purvis is my dearest friend ; socially he is a solicitor's clerk in a north county town which shall be called Blank. For the same obvious reasons the name I have given him is not to be found in his certificate of birth. My own name is—well, Norval Shepherd, and I am in the principal bank in the town.

I don't remember how it first arose. I know we were very busy in our respective callings, and dare not on any account ask for a holiday ; but that was not all. I am afraid I must confess that what gave rise to our adventure was (now I look back upon it) a most contemptible spirit of bravado, fostered by the taunts and chaff of a select circle of feather-brained friends. At any rate we pledged ourselves to see all that could be seen of the Colonial Exhibition in London between that present day, Tuesday, and the following Thursday without leaving our work for a single hour. Of course it was understood that we must try and see it by night.

I had not been in London for years, and Will had never been there in his life.

On Wednesday I could always leave at four, and on that particular Wednesday Will had to leave the office at three, to see a client at some distance, and bring his instructions to the office the next day. He arranged to hurry over this, and then take the train on from the village where his client lived to the first stopping station of the London express. Here I was to pick him up.

At a few minutes past five, therefore, that Wednesday afternoon I was speeding South with two return tickets to London in my pocket, two small dark lanterns, and a good supply of matches.

At N—— Will turned up all right, and in the wildest of spirits. He had succeeded in his negotiations, and was certain to be highly praised by his firm.

It was after eight o'clock when we were rattling across London, and twenty-five minutes to nine when we passed through the turnstiles at the Albert Hall ; the ticket collector raising his eyebrows when we paid at that hour five shillings for admittance.

"Norval," said Will, as soon as we got in—he was quite dazed by our rattle across town—"look at those Christys. I didn't know they had negro minstrels and such low things here. Aren't you surprised ?"

Then, by the aid of an official guide and programme I had bought,

I explained to him that these were some of the West Indian subjects, and had no connection with burnt cork and popular melodies and public entertainments.

We trotted round the corridor to the steps leading to the conservatory.

"Mary!" gasped Will.

"Mary? what Mary?" I said, startled beyond measure, for I thought he had recognised an acquaintance, that our game was up, our wager lost, and our anticipated fun also. "What Mary?"

"Mary Stuart," cried Will, laughing at the fright he had given me. "Mary, who was supposed to have been beheaded ages ago."

And certainly at the head of the stairs the vision of the girl who was selling cigars—thanks to her hair, and the remarkable Stuart head-gear—proved no bad imitation of the unfortunate Scottish Queen.

Turning just then into the corridor we saw another announcement: "Dinner, 7s. 6d. each."

"I must have something, Norval," cried Will. "I cannot walk another step on my present airy condition. And think of what we have before us."

"Well," I said, "we'll turn in and look at the place. Perhaps it is not too late for dinner." So in we went and peered about us, and then marched up to a young man who sat at a desk on the left, with a book containing a multitude of names and addresses of people who evidently had been dining there. We found that the lateness of the hour rather favoured us, as earlier in the evening they informed us we should not have found vacant places. As it was, we got a capital table overlooking the grounds, and, remembering the night before us, rather astonished our particular waiter by our ideas of a 7s. 6d. dinner, which evidently were very different from his.

We had just finished our fish when the whole gardens outside, hitherto lighted only by the silvery moon, burst into a blaze of lamps, twinkling like coloured glow-worms from branch and leaf, and turf; lamps outlining the whole buildings, clusters of lamps in the air and the ground everywhere, dazzling and brilliant in the extreme. But why speak of that which all know? I must hurry on. At a quarter to ten we had finished an excellent cup of tea, pocked a couple of rolls, and sallied out into the grounds, feeling like giants refreshed.

The crowd was still very dense, and we had great difficulty in making our way along to the main block of buildings across the gardens. At the entrance, where the crowd was streaming in, on their way out of the exhibition, I suppose, we were rather discouraged by the apparition of a burly policeman and a sharp looking official labelled "Colind" on his cap, who was making terrible havoc of the cigars, allowing no lights to pass.

"Norval," whispered Will, "I don't like the look of that man. I hope we may get out of this all right. I rather wish we hadn't come up."

The smiling faces of the girls behind the refreshment counter, however, soon reassured us in spite of their hideous dress, evidently the original costume of the "now extinct" female beefeater: black shaded with yellow, like wasps.

Only five minutes more, and we should be locked in. We walked along at hap-hazard and got among a lot of huge Canadian threshing machines.

"Here we are, Norval. Up you go," said Will, darting between two of them.

I followed in an instant. Not a soul was within sight. In a moment we had climbed into the hopper of one of the largest. Two minutes after, all the lights went out like one man, and the scene was changed. Instead of the cheerfully illuminated galleries and corridors, we were in ghost-land. The fantastic shapes of these huge machines stood out in weird outline in the moonlight, while an artistic arrangement of the saucepans and frying-pans shone like burnished silver on the wall.

"Rather an awkward place this, when the machinery is in motion, Norval."

"Yes, I'm afraid you and I would come out all chaff," I replied, in a whisper.

"Excepting my corn, Norval, which I'll thank you not to stand on," said Will, drily. "How long do we stop here?"

"We needn't stay here at all, and we must keep a sharp look-out," I said, "and steer clear of the night watchmen."

We crept down, and peered along the shed. All was silent, so we stepped out like two tabbies, pretending to admire the frying-pans, but really shaking in our shoes. We were not afraid, only a little cold.

We grew more hardened after a while. At the bottom of the room the moon was shining full on a hideous mannikin, life-size, with only one eye, that gave me a fresh attack of the shudders. Long galleries stretched to right and left in patches of silvery light and sombre shade. And the beating of our own hearts was the only sound we heard; and we didn't hear that—we felt it. The fact is we were in a highly nervous state with the tea we had had, and not only felt increasingly shy of the watchman but also of the things in the rooms, so magnified and distorted by the moonlight.

"What in the world is that, Norval?" said Will, in a stage whisper, clutching my arm. "It's like a huge grasshopper."

Certainly the creature, which was at least three feet high, looked as if it was just going to spring.

"If it is a Colonial grasshopper it's dead," I said, bravely. "Come on, Will." And I marched up to the hideous insect, which developed into a new-fangled machine for learning to swim. Another fright pleasantly disposed of. One of the most lively effects, and which rewarded us for all our fright, was the view of the street of Old London by moonlight. It was the real thing. You could just imagine you were taking a moonlight stroll along Cheapside during

the plague, all was so still and deserted. The gates reminded me forcibly of one at Constance, with John Huss's house hard by.

We were just walking through it, when we heard a foot-fall approaching. We pushed open a low door and crouched inside behind a counter, while through the gateway and away down the street we had just come up, with a swinging glass lantern and stick in his hand, and a soft felt hat on his head, passed one of the night watchmen.

We felt agitated, we couldn't tell why, at the sight of this being, and became more so when the first thing that met us on entering the Indian house opposite was a ghastly female figure in red pointing her skinny brown finger right at us as much as to say : "I see you, Will Burns and Norval Shepherd; your names shall appear to-morrow in all the papers, and you shall both be ruined for your mad freak."

Seriously, I think we should have deserved it.

We couldn't see much of the exhibition, of course, but we should have seen much more than we did only we were so nervous. We weren't frightened, only we felt nervous ; we thought it was the tea after that *7s. 6d.* dinner. Tea does make one nervous.

We came upon a dish full of little rolls of butter.

"Here's a lucky find," said Will, taking out a piece of newspaper ; "they'll help our dry bread down when early breakfast time comes." But when we came to touch, they turned out to be nothing but silk cocoons. Not a fright this time, but a disappointment.

The Indian court was well lighted by the moon, and we could see the smallest objects in the cases. At the top, I was just peering into the Indian jungle when I felt a cold hand touch my face.

"Don't do that, Will," I said, starting back. "You know I'm nervous."

"I didn't touch you," returned Will. "I wasn't near you."

I looked in once more, but oh, the thrill that went through me as I felt the fingers on my cheek again. It wasn't Will ; he had moved further off. I put up my hand, and touched a cold face within a foot of mine. I smothered a yell, and shuddered quietly.

"Who are you ?" I asked, *sotto voce*.

"What's up, Norval?" said Will ; but I couldn't move or speak. He had lighted his lantern and turned it into the dark spot where I stood, and revealed—an Indian figure that, with hideous cunning, had been put standing in front of the glass in such a way as to touch anyone looking into the case.

"Come along," I said, regaining my voice. "I don't think this is an interesting place at all."

Just then the watchman's footstep coming up the Indian court was heard. We did not run, but we advanced rapidly, Will first, into a shallow pond that had been carelessly made right in the middle of the floor in a part that was pitch dark. We got wet up to our knees, and made a great splashing, our hearts, as usual, in our mouths. However, out we scrambled, and hurried along on the matting (where

our wet boots left no track) to a line of carriages. We found a door unlocked and got in.

"Home," said Will to the imaginary driver.

"Lie well back," I said; "he's coming up this way."

And surely enough he did.

The pond was still very wavy, which decidedly puzzled him. He looked at it, walked round it twice, and then looked at it again with his lantern.

"Curious," he must have thought, "these Indian ponds can't stand our cold nights; no wonder they shiver a bit."

He walked straight past the shafts of our carriage; we crouched down between the seats.

When the danger was over, we set to work on our rolls and my flask, and at last sallied forth, somewhat revived, exactly as a clock near struck midnight.

In spite of the hour we didn't feel quite so nervous, and enjoyed ourselves considerably for some time, not only in inspecting the remarkable collection from the West Indian and other small colonies, but quite as much in walking slowly along after our friend, the night watchman, and assisting him in seeing all safe and sound.

Had we been more nervous, the hideous groups of natives, life-size, would certainly have disconcerted us. As it was, we were only amused by the ruffian with a small suet chopper hanging from his nose, and the more refined savage with the shark's teeth in his ears and round his neck.

We passed more than one trophy of fruit, at which we cast loving glances, while an enormous pile of biscuits, behind glass, also interested us in spite of our rolls. We didn't feel greedy, but only curious to know the flavour of colonial biscuits. A refreshment counter finally overcame us; we left the watchman and stepped inside. I think the rolls only whetted our appetites, and an unusual amount of exercise had had the effect of making the quadrant dinner a matter of history. We sat down behind the counter by the side of a range of glass jars full of sponge cakes, bath-buns, and other delights. At our feet was unlimited lemonade, bottled beer, &c.

"Now what about this, Norval? I must have something, but I don't like stealing."

"Pay for it, then, like a man, Will. Let's see. Two bottles of beer sixpence, six sponge cakes sixpence, four bath-buns eightpence."

"And sandwiches," said Will.

"Six ham—they are ham—sandwiches, one shilling; total two and eightpence. Here it is, before we begin. I'll put it on this ledger, where it will be seen. Now we can go ahead with a clear conscience." And we did at last get outside the whole eighteen articles.

It was now after two o'clock. For the first time we felt thoroughly happy, and set out again to make the most of what remained of

the moonlight. As we approached one of the monster dining-rooms of the place, we again heard the watchman.

"There's more than one coming," said Will, as we crouched behind a huge stuffed fish.

"They sound like a whole regiment; a dozen at least," I said, as we heard the compact tramp of many feet stepping very lightly. As, however, it did not get nearer, but kept going on, our curiosity got the better of us, and we rose and looked round the corner.

What a sight! Across the floor, in the moonlight, disappearing by a hole at the dining-room, was a living stream of rats. Huge grey ones, sleek brown ones, some nearly black. It was evidently one of their noted restaurants. I never saw so many rats before.

Unfortunately, just beside us on a stand was a pile of small brass gods from Burmah. I knew it was wrong, but it was the only damage we did during the whole night, and the temptation was irresistible. Seized with the same impulse, we caught up two and hurled them at the rats.

What a commotion. Squealing, running in all directions. Never did those two idols strike such terror before.

But instead of following up their advantage, the two little gods lay still on the floor, and one wise old rat stole softly up and felt first one and then the other with his whiskers, then trotted slowly off. Soon he brought back more, and in another minute the rats were running over our gods as if they were two stones lying in the way. So much for familiarity. No one shall get too familiar with me. Looking down the gallery we saw a star shining like an electric light near the floor of the building.

"They've forgotten to turn that out," said Will. "Did you ever see such a light? It can't be our friend's lantern."

"It may be a hole, and light coming through," I replied, advancing cautiously. The nearer we got the brighter it shone, sending a perfect stream of rays towards us.

We began to feel the tea working again in our terror, but still we crept on, when unmistakable steps behind compelled us to go faster; and thus urged on from the rear, we found it was the huge glass eye of a gigantic sword fish sparkling in the moon. We got behind a piano near, and saw *two* of our enemies approaching. Something had evidently roused their suspicions, for they were talking earnestly and swinging their lanterns in every direction.

"If they had only a dog it would be all up," whispered Will.

"Something wrong inside here, Marston," said one watchman to the other. "Them idols cannot move of themselves, I'll warrant."

"If I catch any thieving rascal in here," responded the ferocious Marston in blood-curdling tones, "I'll make short work with him, whoever he is."

"Whoever is in will stop in, Marston, that's certain. I've seen

to every door, so there's no way out. We'll come across him afore morning."

"Blue look out," cried Will. "There they go. Wait till they're out of hearing, and then we'll have a tune."

In spite of all my entreaties, Will opened the piano, and, regardless of the risk, while I held the lantern, played with one thumb, "God save the Queen," as near the top of the piano as he could.

I kept listening intently, and at last heard steps in the distance.

"We must fly; quick, Will; come along." And away we went behind some large curtains a short distance off.

Then we stopped and listened. All was still again.

At last—No—Yes, there certainly was someone at the piano.

The watchman had discovered it full open, and appeared feebly trying to remember the scales of his youth.

"Of all the players I ever heard," said Will—

"Hush, listen. He's going in for variations."

"It's a Moonlight Sonata of his own," returned Will.

The noise was dreadful. Half a dozen notes at hap-hazard appeared to be struck anywhere on the keyboard.

Slowly working our way round as the playing still continued, we at last reached a point where we could see the front of the instrument. No one was there! The sonata, however, was going on furiously. One could imagine a phantom Rubinstein, with twenty-four fingers on each hand, careering over the notes, but none could be seen.

"I have it," said Will, darting forward, and before I could catch him he ran to the piano with my stick and dealt a savage blow at the notes. A hideous squeal and all was still.

"Here, Norval, quick! there's half a dozen of them."

I rushed up. Rats again. One lying dead on the keyboard, the others had disappeared.

"They are a gay family, these town rats. Fancy going in for sonatas, Norval! However, if this row doesn't bring all the beadle's about here in five minutes I shall be surprised. In any case we'll inspect another part."

I think we walked for half an hour to the most remote portion of the building before we halted again in front of a squatter's hut.

On a bench was a basin of water; a towel and a piece of soap lay near.

"I'll have a wash, Norval. You keep watch."

So Will gave himself a good polish, for we had accumulated a lot of dust in hiding behind pianos and curtains, and I followed suit.

We then tried to get into the hut but the door was fast, so we got in through a window. Two comfortable couches lay along the wall covered with rugs.

"Fasten that window, Norval, and we'll just have a nap to wind up with. I'm tired of sight-seeing."

I closed the shutter, and secured it with a wooden button.

"Only forty winks," said Will; "we must get out of this by five, and it's now four."

"All right, old fellow. I shan't sleep many minutes."

I lay down resolving not to sleep at all, as I was not sure of Will. I did just close my eyes—it seemed for a moment—and must have dozed off, for I remember thinking I was in the bank after hours, and a crowd of people were battling at the doors trying to get in. A confused hum of angry voices was heard outside the windows, and I sat at the desk and listened.

"There's someone in there," I heard a woman saying.

"Gracious!" said another; "is there?"

"Oh, look, look, mother! a man—two men."

I opened my eyes. Just above me, looking through the window, which had been pushed open, was a small boy with a red face and a huge white collar.

The situation flashed upon me in an instant; also our deadly peril. We had overslept ourselves, and missed our train! It was broad daylight and after ten, for here were the visitors. I flattered myself I never displayed greater presence of mind than at that instant. I woke Will, who started up, and put my finger on my mouth, which he understood, and looked out of the window. Only a couple of old ladies—a chance yet.

"In a moment, ma'am," said I, unbarring the door, "and you may walk in. This is a real squatter's hut. My chum and me brought it from Wagga Wagga, and for twenty years we never slept in any other." The ladies and the rosy boy walked in.

"What hard beds," they said.

"Very hard ma'am; but hard work and hard beds suit each other. My chum here," I said, "has overslept himself, this morning; been up late last night, or the door would have been open for you."

The ladies were much gratified.

Other visitors now came up; but we had saved ourselves, and feeling very uneasy at the consequences of our long sleep, we quietly walked through the galleries to the nearest door, passing the sword-fish, now looking benign, and the refreshment stall (our stall) now embellished with the female befeater, doubtless with our two shillings and eightpence in her pocket. Last of all we met, face to face, the night watchman who had dogged us all night. "Good-bye, Marston," said Will, affably.

"Good-bye, sir," said the man, raising his hat in blank astonishment.

We got home that afternoon, and, fortunately, though we lost our wager we did not lose our respective situations, which we richly deserved to do.

“THE KING OF THE BIRDS.”

An Incident in the Captivity of Louis XVII.

DAY by day on the turret stones
 The sunbeams shone or raindrops fell
 Through all the days in a hundred years :
 And the raindrops loved the place so well
 That they hollowed a bed in the cold grey wall,
 And made for themselves a tiny lake,
 Clear and cool, where the passing birds
 Lingered a little their thirst to slake.

Day by day up the turret stairs
 Wearily toiled a little lad,
 Guilty of bearing a royal name,
 Dwelling a prisoner lone and sad.
 Never a joy in life he knew,
 Save for a while in the long dull day,
 To climb the stairs to the prison wall,
 And watch the sparrows so free and gay.

“ My birds,” he called them ; and very soon
 Fearless they fluttered about his feet ;
 And the boy would listen with wistful eyes
 To their happy twitter, low but sweet.
 They learnt to come at the gentle call
 Of the king who had neither crown nor throne ;
 And the child kept court on the turret wall,
 With only the birds his sway to own.

But the small feet grew too tired to climb
 The long steep stairs to the turret grey ;
 The birds for their ruler looked in vain,
 And their song was sad as they flew away.
 The winter came and the birds were gone,
 The snow on the prison fell thick and fast ;
 But Death had opened the prison door,
 “ The King of the Birds ” was free at last.

FLORENCE TYLEE.



M. L. GOW.

J. SWAIN.

"I POISONED HIM!"